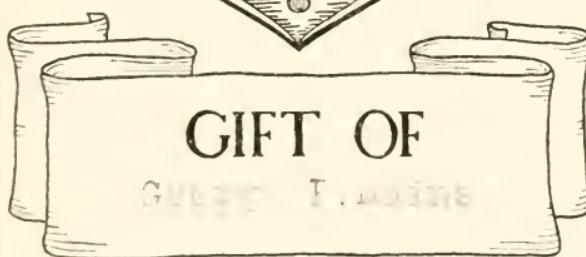
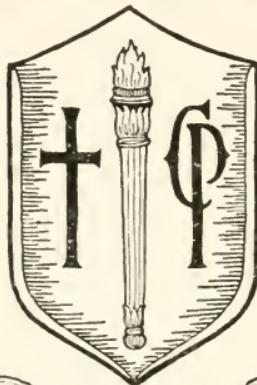


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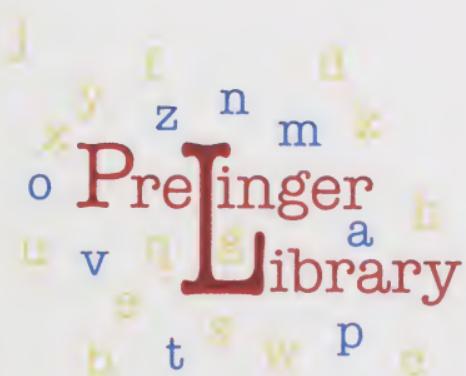
LOWELL

WILLIAM A. QUAYLE

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J. Lowell.

MODERN POETS  
AND  
CHRISTIAN TEACHING

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LOWELL

BY  
WILLIAM A. QUAYLE, D.P.



NEW YORK: EATON & MAINS  
CINCINNATI: JENNINGS & GRAHAM

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## PRELUDE—A CHAPTER ON BLOOD RELATIVES

THE preacher is every good man's brother. He is God's licensed lover of the best. The best men, measures, manners, places, vocations, avocations, neighborhoods, doings, sayings, all catch his eye and heart, and hold them in loving fealty. This it is that makes the preacher's business and life unapproachable for beauty. His vocation is as stately as Edinburgh, as beautiful as Naples, and as bewildering as a great metropolis. He is not common man, nor hath common method nor intent in life. He comes to help the cause of goodness on. He challenges men and women, saying, "Have ye seen God to-day?" He has the apostolate for virtue, ethics, Christ, Christianity. He belongs to all worlds. He speaks in the vernacular of the highest thought and love and hope and dream. No things lie below his horizon. He marches toward the eternal dawn, and so has all the daylight along the path he takes. Like Saint Christopher, he serves the highest; and his commission is signed of Christ. Now, seeing the preacher is such a man—so boundless in purpose and high in his aspirations, and blood relative to

the divinities in time and eternity—it can but be that he will find himself homesick for the most elect fellowship earth supplies. We would think it of him in theory, and find it of him in fact. This is the halo about a preacher's head—that good things beckon to him as familiar friends. There is no compliment like that—none. Preacher, if you saw Elia going along your street, would you not hug up to him? Or if the broad-browed Plato meditated along some academe, would you not beat time with your feet to his measured goings, and with your brain and heart to his wide sayings? Or if Æschylus, with his winter locks, should mumble to himself some strophes from his "Agamemnon," would you not listen? Or if Francis Bacon read over to himself his essay on "Atheism," would you not thank your stars that you were there to hear him read it? Or if Alexander Smith were writing "Dreamthorp," or Emerson his essay on "Beauty," would you not say the day you spent in their society was a marked day in your calendar? A preacher's affiliations are princely. He belongs to all fraternities of noble worth without the trouble of joining. He is born to them. Every high thing fits his hand as if it were a sword made for his sole using. Botany, astronomy, philosophy, biology, psychology, chemistry, literature, painting, architecture, eloquence,

poetry, do not need to plead with him for a hearing. He sits an eager auditor to all they have to say. When I think what a preacher is, how far and high his thought may aspire to soar, how long a journey he enters on with his own feet, how unequivocal his position on all things pertaining to virtue, how certified a champion he is of weakness and worth, how God lets him talk about his own and one Son, Jesus Christ—then I laugh out loud, nor can forbear my laughter.

Prayer I assume to be the highest expression of the human soul, and next to prayer is poetry. As a method of speech, then, poetry is the soul's highest form of utterance. What need, then, to suggest that poetry and the preacher are necessitated friends? I assume that since the apostolic days preaching, as preaching, has never soared so high as in Henry Ward Beecher. There were in him an exhaustlessness and an exuberance, an insight deep as the soul, a power to turn a light like sunlight for strength on the sore weakness of humanity, a bewilderment of approach to the heart to tempt it from itself to God that I find nowhere else; and it has been my pleasure to be a wide reader of the sermonic literature of the world. Compared to him, Berry, the English preacher, whom Beecher thought most apt to be his successor in Plymouth pulpit, and who was

invited by that church to such successorship—Berry was an instrument of a couple of strings matched with Beecher's harp of gold. Phillips Brooks cannot in any just sense be put alongside him; and Simpson in his genius was essentially extemporaneous and insular. Beecher was perpetual, like the eternal springs. In Robertson of Brighton are some symptoms of Beecher, but they are cameo and not building stone resemblances. Beecher was the past master of our preaching art. Storrs and Beecher were contemporaries in the same city. Storrs was a field of cloth of gold. Gorgeous he was, and a man of might. But you cannot get from the thought of effort in him in his effects. In Beecher is no sense of effort, any more than in a sea bird keeping pace with a rushing ship. As I have seen birds sail hour on hour and never flap a wing, and yet dig down into valleys, and rise high where the blue sky was dappled with its clouds, so Beecher does. In him are the effortless music and might of a vast reserve of power. Now, this estimate of Beecher may be right or wrong. I give it as my estimate of him. He has no successor, as Samson had no son. Now, how did Beecher stand related to poetry? I urge this concrete case because it affords an expeditious way of getting at the vitalities of this theme. Beecher never quoted poetry.

But Beecher never quoted the Bible, the reason being he was not possessed of a *memoriter* memory, just as Joseph Parker was not. But he held the Bible in solution as the sea holds salt, or the sun holds iron and gold. All things told, it were better to be saturated with a thing, and hold it in your blood, than to be plastered over with a thing. Beecher in his earlier Plymouth pulpit days preached Bible, its spirit, urgency, central loveliness, light, penetration, not less certainly because he seldom gives an exact phrasing from the book. He does the same with poetry. Neither from hymn book nor volume of anybody's poetry do you hear Beecher quote; but he is soaked with poetry. He is a poet.

Hear him pray, and you must see that. In extemporaneous prayer I have observed that the actual spirit of a soul becomes apparent as in no other part of life. When a man prays he is, so to say, off guard. He looks out and a long way off. Himself is left in the wake like the shimmer in a vessel's track. His spirit walks without help. Reading prayers cuts the life off from its highest opportunity of taking its truest flight and highest. So in Parker, nothing is quite so noble as his praying; and Beecher—his prayers have wings as God's doves do. What music and touch of deep truth—only a touch like an angel's

wing might give as the angel swept too near a child asleep; but the touch was a revelation, and was, therefore, sufficient. Beecher was a poet, and poets do not need padding.

*The poet sees.* That is surely what a preacher needs to do. The poet sees the stars and the flush on cheek of woman or of cloud, and the dim violet and Indian summer and hooting owl, though he hides in shadows and the cornfields and the marshes by the sea, and the “flower in the crannied wall,” and the dishevelment of the old ocean, and the pomp of autumn, and the needs of men and their hungers and their thirsts and their trials and their bitternesses and their upleaps and their downfalls—sees men and things and fates and futures. Know you anything the poets have not seen? Goethe saw, though he knew not that he saw it, that sin was its own nemesis. That is “Faust.” Tennyson saw that environment as the explanatory cause of life was frivolous, and wrote the “Idylls of the King.” Wordsworth saw the hills and Rydal Water, and learned the wonder of them by heart; and some of us have loved him for the thing he did, and shall love him all our days. In a vile age Edmund Spenser saw that virtue alone was beautiful, and wrote “The Faerie Queene,” than which no sweeter proclamation has ever been made of the white beauty of

truth and goodness save by Jesus only. One of the elect spirits of the world, who had kept his life white, a devotee of duty, who had been in elbow touch with England's greatest ruler, Oliver Cromwell, who, when he saw the Puritan defeated not by arms—the Cavalier could not do that—but by the insane hunger for a king, when his blindness made his life a starless night yet not so dark he could not see great Cromwell exhumed and hung on high for villainy to laugh at, when himself thought each step coming to his impoverished door was an officer's step which meant his arrest, then he gloomed his great soul in the tragedy of "Paradise Lost." He housed all the Puritan failure in that gloomy, glorious house, but came to his larger self once more and strove to write "Paradise Regained," which should in reason have blazed with glory, but did not. He could not so rise from eclipse. Those poems are the story of a great spirit in eclipse, struggling yet to trample the darkness down and stumble into light. Chaucer is a man who sees and enjoys his world, and in him is a lusty love of life much worthier than the feminine view of life afforded us by Meyer. Bryant is the poet of outdoors; and we are outdoor folk. Longfellow is the poet of indoors and twilights and the lighting of the lamp; and there are indoor folk to whom ministers must

minister. Poe is the poet of intoxicants, and lives in a weird world which we must look full in the face as men. Whittier is the man in love with goodness, and at one with God, and sure of the eternal boundaries of the homeland of the soul. Lowell is the scholar breaking into life. Burns is a man blurting out his weaknesses and woes and, like a selfishness he was, bringing himself uppermost at every breath, and yet a man whose words had bird song in them; and songs of birds are worth more than gold to a roomy life. Dante was sure of retribution unless pardon stepped in for a soul's release. Sophocles is crushed with a sense of something outside ourselves which makes our lives. But enough is said to justify my word, "The poet sees." Having eyes he uses them, which is quite the reverse of most men and women. The novelists who write those tender and heavenly episodes from common life are simply folks who have eyes to see those things we are blind to. The preacher should be at one with poets because they have seen the land, and all of it. Among them, they have missed nothing. If we were to ask for a dragoman who should interpret us to earth, and earth to us, and leave no lonely cranny unvisited, whom should we seek but poets? They have hit all the keys having music in them. They have gone wherever life has gone, or nature or

God. I think it practically impossible to read all of Tennyson, for instance, and not have a wide-open eye to nature and to its interpretive quality. I think it impossible to read Shakespeare and not fall in love with life. I think it rare to find a common reader of Shelley without the sense of the jar and lack of destination in him, or of Byron without a haunting sense of the deviltry of perpetual selfishness. In themselves, or vicariously, if I may so say, poets have been or seen or experienced the round of life. To be with such sight-seers is to fill the soul with windows open on every street the wide world has. Preachers use books of illustration instead of being books of illustration for the simple reason that they were never trained to see things and men and wonders. Home-grown illustrations are manifestly better than tropic illustrations, just as home-grown fruit is best. To the seeing eye, the universe is at our door. Here is Emerson's value. He is disjointed, mumbling, ambling, but sees things, wades where the grasses and flowers and thistles of life are knee-deep. Seeing is another name for insight. Insight into care, want, humility, foolish pride, sham penitence, hid grief, pent-up grief, intemperance of attitude, hysteria in static if not in a dynamic state, mental parsimony, or mental ill-breeding, the hopes which may legitimately be placed in

man—insight into these things is so major a necessity with a preacher as to belong to his alphabet needs. Where shall he learn them with so little sweat and in such royal company as with the poets?

*The poet feels.* And life is feeling. Life is not ratiocinative process any more than the world is a field of ice. Life scorches. It has volcanoes that blister the pavements, and choke the air, and summers that thaw winters out, and breed flowers and aromas. He who has not felt has not lived. The human touch is the touch of feeling. These lonely mountain peaks of mind are breeders of snow fields, not forests. It is with exertion that one convinces himself that Kant was a man. He might have passed for a logical or philosophical machine. I can hear the wheels turn in him; and they need oiling. The frigid zones are not marketable as the temperate zones. The mind market may be deserted but the heart market is always crowded. Christ was a Sun and thawed life. There are no ice-bound coasts where Christ is risen. The reason why Jesus was not a thaumaturgist was that his wonders were spilled out of a bleeding, genial, compassionate heart. He felt so that he stopped the widow on her way to the house where her children and her husband lay together dead, and would not let her put her only son there yet. “He had compassion on her.”

Men cannot forget those words. His miracles were wrung out of him for pity's sake; and that keeps them human, and makes them divine. To feel is what changes trees to animals. The hacked tree makes no moan; the hacked man bleeds and swoons and moans in his stupor of sleep. Feeling is the mighty fact of life. He who would have ingress and egress with lives must feel. And the poets have felt. They among them wear the world on their heart. Just as we have seen bell-ringers run the gamut of intricate musical compositions among them by reaching the bell that held the note their music called for, so the poets ring out the feeling of this world of hearts, and among them have missed no note. David felt; and that is why he sobbed out penitential grief which leaves no need for any penitent to invent a tear or any anguish. He may borrow all of David. His sobbing helps the world. Homer had the blood of forty thousand battles in his veins, and so has set battle for the centuries. The "*Iliad*" is the battle-field of mankind. Tasso had crusaders' marches and triumphs and wounds in him, and so "*Jerusalem Delivered*" is the crusader's epic. It matches the crusade of soul to this last hour. Homer had innumerable adventures in his breast, and so wrote the "*Odyssey*," which is the laureate poem of adversity and adventure and discovery, and

will have no competitor. Ulysses lives forever the antagonist of angry seas and foreign shores. Jean Ingelow felt, and so has found the heart of life listening to her. Mrs. Browning felt with that wild wonder of a woman's love, and so man and woman want her as they want a mother. Keats felt aspirations, dim, dreamy, unclassifiable; and he makes a sky for dreams to soar in. How does life feel? Well, poets know. Life does feel—are we always very sure of that? Jesus was; and Jesus was chief of poets. The poets are, if I may put it so crudely, a hospital ward in which lie all the feelings of mankind, and walking through that ward you shall hear the laments and pæans life is capable of. The preacher who does not feel sin, and feel woe, and feel heartache, and feel the anguish the penitent knows, and feel the hunger which eats into the flesh, and feel the laughter a child and a lover exult in, and feel the progress of heart from lower to higher, and feel the languor which makes men fall asleep while they walk the road with their knapsacks on their shoulders, and feel that life needs heartening, and feel that life is competent for help—that preacher might as well be dead.

*The poet has dealt with the most vital problems.* And the preacher, provided he be true to his legacy of divine serviceableness, has the most vital of all

vitalities to present. He and the poet, then, are close of kin. I think to illustrate the truth of this proposition from one poet, Browning. Browning has dealt with divorce, marriage for position, heredity, environment, and the failure of both in both directions, sin as palpable and a monstrous fact, forgiveness, hypocrisy self-justified, the failure for the largest by the lack of deep feeling, the passion and power of music, the defect of the artistic temperament, motherhood, herohood, old age beautiful and beneficent, old age crabbed as gnarled wild crab apples in early autumn, lust, scholarship, humbuggery, intellect, the poet, smirched virtue, conscience, consciencelessness, love, bewilderment, life as a whole, duty, unknown helpers of life, love above position, the moral sense, natural theology, Christ, belief in God, triumphant optimism, joy in life, husbandhood, wifehood, longing, hope. His soundings are deep, and stretch over wide areas of the sea of the soul. He dredges where he sounds. I have not enumerated his themes, but have suggested a sufficient number to indicate how vast the themes he battles with unbewildered. The preacher who has the great theme would do well to fraternize with those to whom great themes are very natural, and who live in the same house with vital problems.

*Poets know the soul.* I will illustrate this from

Shakespeare. I make bold in saying, what I run no risk in saying, that no study of psychology under any tutor, with dark room of physiological psychologist, can compare with a study of Shakespeare, for a preacher's help. He knew the soul, and walked around through it as a man walks through a familiar street risking no hurt because he knows the way so well. Shakespeare knows no impediments. All roads are open to him. "As You Like It," while some preachers might think the forest of Arden, and Rosalind, and Jaques beneath them and their study, is worth more than some dry course on theology or economics. You get to know womanhood and manhood in Shakespeare. You cannot go from him, in my belief, and not be something of a savant in human nature. He shows the thing rather than tells it. Coarseness of nature, fineness of nature, intense thought, lack of any thought, honor of dubitative cast, and honor which has no lack, the simpleton, the maniac, the conceited donkey of two legs, the assinity of drunkenness, the nemesis of courses of sin, the hellishness of sin-mixed genius, the dolt and the genius, the gentleman and the libidinous beast miscalled a man, the differentiations of vice in individual make-up, the clarity of virtue especially in women—these and more make Shakespeare the preacher's schoolmaster in psychology.

*The poet is creative.* Giving this matter thought, that is a distinguished credential. God is chief creator as he is chief of everything good. His versatility is our amazement and his glory. He is the maker, the poet. He is to make all things new, and has made all things new. His leaves and fruits and ferns and cliffs are creations which make words poor in telling their grace and beauty. Poets emulate God in their limits. They are men. He is God. But what they have created is a fabulous wealth. “The Faerie Queene” is as certainly a creation as a star is, and its light as gentle and enduring. In poets is creative genius as above all other artisans. They are making so that even their rehabilitations are creations, as one may know by noting Shakespeare’s historical characters and studies. Who shall say that Marc Antony is not as original a person as Rosalind? Life leaps in the veins of what the poets do; and their poems and stratagems and characters are fresh contributions to the thought of men. The preacher is creative. No sermon is a work of art, which is a hewed thing whether from marble, wood, or words, but a formed thing, a life which grew with urgency like the willows by the stream. Not to feel that a sermon is as certainly a creation as a telescope or a poem or a book, is for a preacher to find himself among the rubbish of the world’s

camp. Men who hear should feel that whom they hear is a creator, and what they hear a fresh thing filled with life like a trailing arbutus. For a preacher to feel so is to kill the drudgery of sermon making, and to lift it to the realm of music and sculpture.

*The poets breed inspiration in a life as sunrise breeds morning.* And do I need to adduce illustrations of this? I wot not. “Abide with Me” was like a first sight of the sea to me. I recall its dawn on my heart as if it were not years ago in college days but last night. Preachers ought to give off inspiration as central suns give light, heat, power. A preacher who does not inspire is not worth his keep. To inspire means to keep close to inspirations. Nor is it to the point to say that a preacher has all inspiration in his Master. That is quite true; but it is also true that Christ is the poet’s Master, and sets the fire a-glowing in the poet’s heart; and as Jesus gladdened his eyes by looking on flower fields and fields of stars and on the sweet faces of little children, while and because he was God’s Son and fellowshipped with his Father knowing that God ought to exclude nothing from us but include all things for us, so preachers are to get inspirations from everywhere, and by being in Christ and for Him are qualified to get the most out which Christ has

put in, just as a musician can best understand the music of a master. Poets are one of our Master's ways of saying his say to our souls.

Therefore of all folks preachers and poets may well be the best of friends. The poet is he who stands above us nigher to the dawn, and calls down, like the old watchers from the temple's citadel, "The morning breaketh; day is here."

## LOWELL—THE PURITAN

LOWELL was a Puritan. This is set down with immediacy because it explains his character and achievement. His ancestors were emigrants to America in 1639. They came when only such were pioneers as were masterful Puritans. Such as expatriated themselves from England in that bleak, early day, and came to the bleak inhospitality of that wintry, sullen shore, were pilgrims of truth, were lovers of God and freedom, and were given over to the larger notion, and in that love found sacrifices pleasant to the taste. Conscience piloted those emigrants across the seas; and Duty guarded those immigrants. They came for righteousness; and they stayed with righteousness.

Those pilgrim Puritans were vigorous men. They cared what God thought. They bulk big now, and will while character has charm for brain and religiousness and heart.

The Dutch in 1620 imported slaves; the Puritans in 1620 imported character. The difference is past computation. Puritanism was robustness. A sight of Cromwell gives a sense of massiveness, as of a mountain. He was there to stay. Variability seemed not to belong to him. And he was

this phase of Puritanism. They were in nothing namby-pamby. Gentle they were, but not flabby. It is no matter of wonder, to such as look those men in the eyes, that the Ironsides conquered everybody in sight. Invincibleness was ingrained. Nothing scared them. Tyrannies, dangers, winter seas, foreign potentates, were as nothing to their severe yet steady onward march. They thrill us. We are in their hands. Those who can be touched by massive personalities are as willow twigs in the grip of these remote magnificent characters. Some Puritans died on Marston Moor and Worcester and Dunbar fields; some of them lived to meet the worse than dying under the carnal lust of Charles II; some of them came across sea or ever swords were drawn for liberty. They had battles in their blood, all of them had. They were of one blood. God was on them like sunlight. They knew whose they were. I covet not the mental and moral make-up of those who can sit and critically chastise the Puritan, tell glibly where his faults lay, and count them as you would sun spots. Such people will not thrill when the sea is at tempest. They will run home to keep the ocean spray from wetting their garments.

All that touches these battle-mooded lovers of purity is pertinent to those who are to study Lowell as a religious teacher. He brought his larger, his

elemental nature from them. Their marks are on him. He even wears their scars. Hosea Biglow is brother to Governor Winthrop. The lapse of years has not thinned the blood, but has given differing occasion. That is all. In Cromwell's day Lowell would have written his stormy poetry with a battle pike. That long-spent passion for liberty and for man is what marks Lowell always. And he knew this in part. He did not know it in its totality. It is not given to men to get their total actuality. But Lowell knew he was always preacher. The moral would work into his thought, and so into his poetry. He was not even dimly related to heathenism. A Keats's mild moonlight of morals was unthinkable to Lowell. He was not a Greek: he was a Puritan which for the larger uses of the world is the needed commodity. We want them both. We use them both; but if we were, as workmen in the business of this brawny world, to do away with either contribution as working material, we could have no moment of hesitant mood as to which it must be. The Puritan tense moral and divine attitude is essential beyond all art and tragedy and philosophy of Greece. The ancient world was æsthetical: the modern world is ethical. The difference is all in favor of the modern world. Those heathen culturists, who continually weep tears

of dew about the lost beauties of heathenism and Greece, will not be found drenched with the sense of the moral majesty of man. Man is not a picture, nor a statue, but a soul. He is not a figure for a metope, but a stature for eternity. His ethical value is his regal value. We have not fallen behind the Greeks, but have gone beyond them. So that the moral bias in poetry or life, if it lacks in “art,” which is debatable, avails as a helper to life. Things are more than picturesque. They make or mar the soul. And that is a question not of æsthetics but of ethics. Lowell was by force of his personality not of Greek but Puritan temper. Therefore is he a religious poet.

Modern Puritanism has become so washed out as to induce a smile. The exodus of the Puritan into the Unitarian was as tragical in its outcome as the former exodus of the Puritan was epic. That loosening of the God-grip on the wrist is responsible for the fads of the modern puritan (spelled with small letters), as distinguished from his great forbear (which was spelled with capitals). Arlo Bates's “The Puritans” justly satirizes this later development. He is just. I hide behind his satire not using mine own, lest any should think me unequipped for such service. But to see that burly, moral majesty of the old-time Puritan degenerated into the modern amusing and unethical

Boston cults is a sight very pitiable. The facts are undeniable. The novelist has spoken of things commonly known. He gives no hearsay narrative. That a Mrs. Eddy should now reign, where aforetime were women and men of moral granite, is sad as tears. So low are the mighty fallen. If the modern Puritan seems gone to shallows, we must not be diverted thereby from the heartening of the other days when Puritans were brawnier than oak. And to that elder day was Lowell unconsciously related. Here let this chapter end as this chapter began—Lowell was a Puritan.

## LOWELL—AS RELIGIOUS POET

IF one were called on extemporaneously to name the religious poets of our English and American speech he would probably not name Lowell. He does not make strident appeal to us so. Tennyson would be in any list; and Edmund Spenser would be bound to be there. Milton would use his sea trumpet in such an orchestra. Robert Browning would smile and sing his way into such a feast of trumpets. Whittier with his quiet Quaker smile, and his “thees” and “thous” and his song like the thrush at evening:

I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care,

must be in this company. No one would be so thoughtless as to omit him. But Lowell has put his primary impress on us in other realms. He is National. His is our one great national ode, the “Commemoration Ode.” His is “The Present Crisis.” His is the country call, the rustic cry for freedom in “The Biglow Papers.” These and kindred poems would, I think, normally give impress of his genius, so that we would not at first suggest him as a religious poet. We had felt him other; and until our thought had been

attracted to his hymnic quality we would not have given that aspect of his genius other than passing heed, and possibly no comment at all. He is not a hymn writer. Those gusts of devotion, so usual with Whittier, do not belong to him. Possibly nothing he has written would allow of such musical setting as to walk into the sanctuary. This is not a test of his being a religious poet, but does express the well-defined difference between two New England poets.

Whittier was orthodox, as we say. He believed the basilar truths of Christianity. He could have answered at an Athanasian roll call. He was no Hicksite, but true Quaker. We feel the heart of him warm as a south wind in summer. Lowell was, as Longfellow and Samuel Longfellow and Holmes, Unitarian—at least so we must judge. He was no mild pantheist as Emerson, nor mild nothingist as Emerson. Emerson cut himself away from even those trammels called Unitarian, which could, one would judge, be worn so lightly. But if I might be permitted to judge, Lowell and Longfellow were Unitarian of the school of Channing, and certainly not of Theodore Parker.

Judging from a careful reading of their lives, poets are not apt in theology. Poets go not by their thinkings-out of things, but by the blowing of the winds of inspiration through their poet lutes.

They get their theology from what they themselves say, rather than as with the lower of us who make our lips say what our thoughts have digged out. Inspiration does vagabond things with poets. They come at things so wide away from any method the everyday man pursues. Tennyson in his prose reasoning-out gets bemired; but give his genius play, and who can quite equal him amongst the stanchest putters of things theologic. If a poet sees at all, he is doubly likely to take a hill view. His gaze sweeps far and free. He gets the great truths, as the sun gets sight of the mountains.

We shall not anticipate, therefore, that with Lowell we shall have the deluging views of Christology for which Browning is famous. He will not exult,

See the Christ stand!

But theist he is, not pantheist: Lowell is not culturist. He saw with too wide-open a soul not to see that we shall not get far with culture for propulsive power. He saw a schoolhouse was not a church, nor could subserve the same purpose. The culturist would make schoolhouse mean church. Such views are historically inadequate. If a poet believes at all, he will, in poet necessity, believe something worth while. He may believe against God, as Shelley; he may put out the fire

of God with his steady, pitiless and yet pitiful rain of doubt, as Arnold; he may be atheist, or agnostic; he may be to all intents heathen, as William Watson, in whose pages never flower any holy blossoms which might have grown sudden out of the heart of God; or he may be billowed away on the wide waters of God till faith makes noon light in the night, as Browning; or he may see, with Lowell, that, in so far as the life of the world and the life of the soul are concerned, God is a necessity—may see that no God is unthinkable.

I think that, with all poetic minds who do not turn against God, God is what Samuel Clark thought he was, an intuition. Poets do not reason God out. They know he is around. As we know the sun is here, without asking the astronomers, so the souls of the best know God is around. They do not query: they assert. As a child takes for granted the love of the father, and goes to sleep with tousled head pillowed on his breast, safe and glad, and with a kiss, so the poets do. God must be here, else how dare we fall asleep? We are safe; and how could we be were God not around? Some such way, however incompetent my putting, do best poets come to their sense of God; as Tennyson implies in his sublime dogmatic,

I have felt.

Lowell's father was a Congregational minister, and pastor of the West Congregational Church of Boston for forty-five years, which was his ministerial lifetime. Lowell's grandfather, John Lowell, was member of the Continental Congress in 1781, and was appointed by President Washington, on the adoption of the Constitution, Judge of the United States District Court in Massachusetts, and in 1801 became Chief Justice of the Circuit Court. All this is pedestal for this: He introduced into the Bill of Rights the clause by which slavery was abolished in Massachusetts. He advocated its adoption before the convention; and when it was adopted said: "Now there is no more slavery in Massachusetts; it is abolished, and I will render my services as a lawyer gratis to any slave suing for his freedom, if it is withheld from him." Which things are set down as indicating how, as relates to freedom and religion, Lowell's immediate antecedents were as much to his helping as was his ingrain of Puritanism from remoter yesterdays. In other words, his was a fair start toward being a helper and not a hurter of the world.

## LOWELL—HIS MORAL ATMOSPHERE

To walk along a given road by Winter and by Spring is two experiences, not one. The road is the same; but the walk is not the same. We have walked in different worlds. The atmosphere made the difference. In Winter, the ways were white: the trees stooped under their weight of snows: the far and near were shivering with their wintryague: the dust you trod on was dust of snow: the tree trunks stood black against their landscape of ermine: the crows which cawed their way along the sky, flying low, appeared blacker than your eyes had ever seen them. The winter atmosphere enswathed the world. The crisp snows were children of the sky. The air was sponsor for the snowdrifts and the nipping frosts and the hurry of feet along the accustomed highway. The world you walked in was all new, not because you had not been familiar with it through many years but because a winter sky held it in thrall. Another day at springtime you walked this same woodland way. The green was washing to and fro on the tree tops: the grass had sheen like new silk: the brook babbled as it voyaged: the voices of the wind were inter-

fused with the voices of the birds: the musk of wood odors and ground odors drenched the air: the sky seemed fresh frescoed with bewildering blue: violets grew in knots as if they were rooted in the soil of paradise: and your step, which on the wintry road had hastened, now loitered like a lover's feet at wooing. Road the same: landscape all new. One road: two landscapes; and all was the difference in atmosphere. The spring breath—why, man, drink it down! This wine never makes drunk, but will make alive. Atmosphere counts in the world. We feel a world by its sky and wind, and touch of both.

So poets have their atmosphere. That is everything. We feel this as we feel the winter wind or the spring breeze rocking the willow. And it is something half apart from what is said. As manner differs from matter, so with this air of the poets. In Byron, whatever the poet says, you feel the same dull, sultry gehenna neighborhood. Byron always glowers; he never lifts a song, or lightens to a smile. In Poe you feel the eternal heartache on him; no matter what he says, the raven broods with piercing eyes and sable voice, and flings his dreary shadow on the heart. In Whitman you feel a crude, coarse soul, which, while it has heights to climb, carries to the heights the same half-sensual luggage. His open road

hardly makes you love the out-of-doors, and his long catalogue of the outside and inside of man scarcely makes him physician or sculptor. You feel as if you had been at a post-mortem examination but had not been visibly profited thereby. In Emily Dickinson's poems you are sitting with a lovable woman—much a woman; very quiet and greatly given to being alone, and you, unknown or else unnoted to her, are with her, she sewing and singing poetry, and such as only a woman could compose. Her similes are woman similes, her thought trend woman thought, and her lift of thought, at sudden, unexpected moments, like the upleap of a skylark—and as sweet.

With Frederic Lawrence Knowles you are with one who swings out gayly toward the sky, and yet has on his face the look of one who feels that on that skyline is a grave fresh dug—and for him; and still none the less gladly does he make his journey. His song speaks of the grave much and often, but the somberness of "*Thanatopsis*" is not on his verse. The light of blessed mornings is on his face and on his heart, and he hears the house a-building he is to dwell in, while the deathless years make music sweet and glad. Hear his song, "*The Tenant*," sing; and you will say, "This is the glad atmosphere of eternity":

This body is my house—it is not I;  
Herein I sojourn till, in some far sky,  
I lease a fairer dwelling, built to last  
Till all the carpentry of time is past.  
When from my high place viewing this lone star,  
What shall I care where these poor timbers are?  
What though the crumbling walls turn dust and loam—  
I shall have left them for a larger home.  
What though the rafters break, the stanchions rot,  
When earth has dwindled to a glimmering spot!  
When thou, clay cottage, fallest, I'll immerse  
My long-cramped spirit in the universe.  
Through uncomputed silences of space  
I shall yearn upward to the leaning Face.  
The ancient heavens will roll aside for me,  
As Moses monarched the dividing sea.  
This body is my house—it is not I.  
Triumphant in this faith I live, and die.<sup>1</sup>

This is the atmosphere of glad eternity.

Bayard Taylor has the atmosphere of wandering.

You track him across the world. Far wandering  
beyond any dream Ulysses knew, is this minstrel  
of ours. He is troubadour, is harpist with worn  
harp in hand, grown dusky with the kiss of  
suns and rains. He rides the desert like a desert  
son on

A stallion shod with fire.

He camps beneath the palms: he dreams be-  
side the Nile: he drifts under the stars of south-  
ern constellations: all centuries are inhabited of  
him.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Sunset Poems*, by Frederic Lawrence Knowles. Copyright, 1906, by Daniel C. Knowles. All rights reserved.

The pine rehearses its story, and the pathetic Hylas lays urn and purple chlamys at his feet, what time he goes to keep tryst with Naiads at swift Scamander.

Much has he traveled in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen.

His atmosphere is the air which swims free about the world, nor knows destination or resting place. He and the wind be travelers together—ever going, never weary.

So much for atmosphere in general. What air do we feel in Lowell? Genial, human, humane, invigorating, hopeful, full of gladness, fleet of foot and wing, sympathetic, tender, appreciative of woman, understanding of man, gleeful in childhood, burdened but not overburdened, open to the largest, high of sky, quick in imagery, which is another way of spelling quick of sight and hearing; air redolent with Some One having been along the way, whose name we must learn to pronounce or fail in getting at the soul of things. This is the Lowell atmosphere, or I mistake what I have all my lifetime been so glad to breathe. The atmosphere is moral, Christian, recent. You know that this is not heathen singing. He is not vague. He does not confound nature and God. He knows a tree is not a dryad, but

is none the less witching because it is not dryad  
but tree. The trees sing,

From the pine tops  
A music of seas far away.

I do not now advert to given poems; I do not now even think of given poems. I think and speak of my feeling as I think of Lowell; how as I have loitered with him many a time, and in many a place—under pine trees crooning viking songs, by the sea with sobbing in its throat, on prairies with the wind blowing far and free, by study fire on weary winter nights when the wild wind shrieked like raving maniacs—wherever read and whatever poem read, I seemed to feel a west wind blowing in my face, and that he with whom I made excursion had seen the Face, and from that illumining had come down helped and glad.

## LOWELL—HIS METHOD

THE writer of this monograph in all cases could have given the poet's thought in prose terms; but such method would not advantage the poet. The poet himself must speak. One verse out of "In Memoriam" makes music, and stirs thought like the sunrise stirs the world from slumber into speech and song and toil. To fail to quote would be a crime both toward the great Laureate and ourselves. We want his wine in his beaker. So it haps that in this brochure whenever in reason possible, Lowell's words have been used. The purpose of this book is scarcely less to stimulate a reading of Lowell's poetry as a whole than to show him as a moral and religious poet and teacher. From first note to last note, from peep of bird at dawn to the last sleepy robin call at dusk, this writer would have Lowell read.

In a poet's own phrasing is a thrill not to be understood save on the receiving. How often have such as read the sayings of the greater souls felt what they can never tell, but in whose memory their hearts grow glad in all the after days. Can anybody fail to keep as a perpetual benefit the seasag of some of Edmund Burke's sayings? They

rock the soul—then and now. Or can Sir Thomas Browne cease his ministry, once having ventured on it, for any single life? Those fascinative phrases which with prose music iterate those wayward fancies, those far-soaring thoughts of one whose presence makes life more glad.

You cannot put Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty" into anybody's phrase but his and not mar somewhat of its grave, engaging loveliness. The theme, the thought, the poise, the repose, that wide-eyed wonder in looking at man's chiefest wonder in himself—the quality of duty, who can express but Wordsworth? To tear a single thread away seems punishable as a misdemeanor. We rob him and we rob ourselves when we tamper with his poet phrase.

The same is true as touching Lowell. He deserves quoting. He comes upon the poet side of us. He surprises us into awakening to the sunrise of his thought. Sometimes he does this with a line, more often by a poem, part or whole. Lowell in the main in the sphere dealt with in this book is diffuse. You cannot corner him in a phrase, just as you cannot corner a prairie by the sky. In "Rhœucus," to illustrate, the ethic quality is nowhere included in a line or two or more, but distills through the poem like a perfume. A significant moral lesson is hidden in the Greek story,

one of the most significant morals, and this no trivial excerpt may catch nor include. The poem as a compact whole essentially must swim into the sky like a cloud. The same is true of such a poem as "Dara." A wise truth is written of therein of which no inkling may be had by any extract. In instances more frequent the author has been compelled to pass by such poems as "Dara" and many another with a remark where it would be more mannerly and just to quote. In other instances the insistence of the lesson has seemed to not only impel but to compel a complete, or at least lengthy, quotation.

To get a palate in love with the taste of a poet's personality in saying things seems to this author a worthy effort. That is what we need. Give a body a taste of Shakespeare's voice, manner, mirth; and you have made one Shakespeare lover more. Give anybody's ear a listening for the skylark music of Shelley at his best; and thereafter that body will require no incentive to attune his ear by music of that bird minstrel. Let a man once love Chaucer's way of saying things; and he will never lose that love.

With poets, in particular, it is a question of voice. It is not so much what they say as how they say. In Burns it is all in the way of saying. Less or more this is true of all poetry. With

Browning as with Dante so much is in the thought—the solemn onward going to realms which we feel strangely aloof and all but utterly remote. This is exceptional. Even with them, the voice of the singing is in something essential. If we select a lyric of Goethe's allowed among his admirers to be his lyric wonder, or near to it, we cannot fail to see that not the matter but the music is main mystery:

Hushed on the hill  
Is the breeze;  
Scarce by the zephyr  
The trees  
Softly are pressed;  
The woodbird's asleep on the bough;  
Wait then, and thou  
Soon wilt find rest.

Or this song from “Faust”:

Like a star,  
That maketh not haste,  
That taketh not rest,  
Be each one revolving  
About his own soul.

Mere quotables are not a test of poetry. Allowed. By which is meant the using of a poet's lines or phrases as epithets or epigrams in the sense that Pope is quotable. He has given aphorisms often but poetry seldom. Many a true poet requires length to include his thought. And we must get the voice. We love to hear voices. Who

that has lain a summer through with head pillow'd  
on the seashore yellow sand and has been wrapped  
in the mellow music of the breathing sea as its  
waters plunge, plunge hour after hour from after-  
glow to morning's first pearl tints across the shift-  
ing water, but must thereafter while life endures  
hold the wide night sea in loving remembrance?  
Its lullabies have sung them into his soul.

Two ways of ethical inculcation are prevalent  
with poets. The one is to add the moral as the  
fable writers did, distinctly at the poem's close.  
This is the normal method with the sonnet. Long-  
fellow's sonnet "Nature" is beautiful as twilight:

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,  
Leads by the hand her little child to bed,  
Half willing, half reluctant to be led,  
And leave his broken playthings on the floor,  
Still gazing at them through the open door,  
Nor wholly reassured and comforted  
By promises of others in their stead,  
Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;  
So Nature deals with us, and takes away  
Our playthings one by one, and by the hand  
Leads us to rest so gently, that we go  
Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,  
Being too full of sleep to understand  
How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

Emily Dickinson has this:

I never saw a moor,  
I never saw the sea;  
Yet know I how the heather looks  
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God  
Nor visited in heaven;  
Yet certain am I of the spot  
As if the chart were given.

This appending a moral is the regulation procedure with Bryant, as witnesses the conclusion of “To a Waterfowl”:

He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will lead my steps aright.

Let it be frankly stated, this is not the roomier way. Didacticism and poetry are not best neighbors. The finished moral method is, as I think, found in such a poem as William Morris’s “The Tomb of Arthur.” Through the whole rises and falls, surges and bleeds, aches and anguishes the remorse that will not hush and cannot die. You cannot from it pluck a stanza and get the meaning. Sob on sob the words rush on, until there is written a poem which for moral power has not many equals. Or the tender half tear, half smile of Saxe Holm:

Like a cradle rocking, rocking,  
Silent, peaceful to and fro,—  
Like a mother’s sweet looks dropping  
On the little face below,—  
Hangs the green earth, swinging, turning,  
Jarless, noiseless, safe and slow;  
Falls the light of God’s face bending  
Down and watching us below.

And as feeble babes that suffer,  
    Toss and cry and cannot rest,  
Are the ones the tender mother  
    Holds the closest, loves the best;  
So when we are weak and wretched,  
    By our sins weighed down, distressed,  
Then it is that God's great patience  
    Holds us closest, loves us best.

O great heart of God! whose loving  
    Cannot hindered be nor crossed;  
Will not weary, will not even  
    In our death itself be lost—  
Love divine! of such great loving  
    Only mothers know the cost,—  
Cost of love which, all love passing,  
    Gave a Son to save the lost.

You cannot get at the tearful melody and wonder of this save by its totality.

This last is Lowell's method. In "The Search" may be seen his natural procedure. The moral is distilled through the length and breadth of the stanzas. The poem is the big thing just as the leaves of the tree are the main matter and the shadow they cast is the subordinate consideration. We would not lightly esteem the shadow, but a rock could afford that solace, whereas leaves are the tree lips to drink the sunshine and the sky. Lowell does not specifically deduce a moral, moralist though he is. He includes his moral. The result is we must allow him more length of statement to get his inculcation than with many another. You cannot break his sayings up into

phrases as you can divide the goings of a sailboat on its waters by its surmounting of wave by wave. You cannot by ictus and arsis, beating time, so separate a swallow's flight. Lowell must have room. Thereby does his worthiness become apparent, a thing specially true as related to his religious teaching. Therefore has this little book essayed to let him have his swallow flight or eagle sky room. In poems like "Agassiz" and the immortal odes of American theme this is not permissible; but who would get those deep-throated melodies must let the poems have their entirety of flight.

In the main, we must characterize Lowell's ethical method as diffuse. It is atmospheric. The quality of air is such that it must be bulked to be seen, then is it blue as amethyst. Probably, outside the ethical poems, no poem would more aptly illustrate this diffuse beauty, palpable everywhere, excerptible nowhere, than that New England idyl, "The Courtin'." No stanza can you borrow which shall bring out the efflorescence of the poem. But when read entire, a picture quaint, human, humorous, tearful, heartful, eternal in character of man and woman and true to the instincts of love whether lettered or unlettered, the place, the purpose, the persons, the fireplace, the sparkles of "the wannut logs," the beautifying of the room

to the lover's eyes because Huldy was in it—all there, and so there that we who are lovers must ever look upon this “courtin’” as among the quaint treasures of poetry:

Zekle crep' up, quite unbeknown,  
 An' peeked in thru the winder,  
 An' there sot Huldy all alone,  
 'ith no one nigh to hender.

Agin' the chimbly crooknecks hung,  
 An' in amongst 'em rusted  
 The ole queen's-arm thet gran'ther Young  
 Fetched back frum Concord busted.

The wannut logs shot sparkles out  
 Towards the pootiest, bless her!  
 An' leetle fires danced all about  
 The chiny on the dresser.

The very room, coz she wuz in,  
 Looked warm frum floor to ceilin',  
 An' she looked full ez rosy agin  
 Ez th' apples she wuz peelin'.

She heerd a foot an' knowded it, tu,  
 Araspin' on the scraper,—  
 All ways to once her feelin's flew  
 Like sparks in burnt-up paper.

He kin' o' l'itered on the mat,  
 Some doubtfle o' the seekle;  
 His heart kep' goin' pitypat,  
 But hern went pity-Zekle.

An' yet she gin her cheer a jerk  
 Ez though she wished him furder,  
 An' on her apples kep' to work  
 Ez ef a wager spurred her.

“You want to see my Pa, I spose?”  
 “Wal, no; I come designin'—”

"To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es  
Agin to-morrow's i'nin'."

He stood a spell on one foot fust,  
Then stood a spell on t'other,  
An' on which one he felt the wust  
He couldn't ha' told ye, nuther.

Sez he, "I'd better call agin;"  
Sez she, "Think likely, *Mister*;"  
The last word pricked him like a pin,  
An'—wal, he up and kist her.

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,  
Huldy sot pale ez ashes,  
All kind o' smily round the lips  
An' teary round the lashes.

Her blood riz quick, though, like the tide  
Down to the Bay o' Fundy,  
An' all I know is they wuz cried  
In meetin', come nex Sunday.

Because of this Lowell method, this writer has been of the mood to let the poet say his say in his own winsome and sometimes wonderful way, as he believes Lowell has a right to be heard.

## LOWELL—HIS GOSPEL OF HUMOR

As may be thought out without the saying, this little book has no right to discuss Lowell as a literary quantity. I would gladly set me to such task, were that allowed by the scope of the purpose of this essay. But the aspect with which this volume must content itself is the Christian. Not what Lowell did as essayist, not what his literary rank is or shall be; not that affluence of gift wherewith he dowered whatsoever position he occupied; not that felicity with which he discovered and affirmed the essential in men and manners and institutions—not any one of these, however enticing, may I enter on. The larger matter is to be my text, and limit my comings and goings.

The religious uses of humor in Lowell are what this section of this essay advertises to. And with some, the suggestion may not be palatable. To those who think the grim look better than a smile, and the tear more a fruit of paradise than ringing, jubilant laughter, who think a smile desecrates the house of God, and that to be somber is to be perilously near to piety, the religiousness of humor will make no appeal. But that is from the point. God invented humor. He may be trusted. Who

made the instrument may be allowed to have a right to choose its stops. God made man the one animal with humor; and this gift has distinct religious uses. What people laugh at, they will remember. And anyone may certify to himself how all but incomparable, as an instrument of reform, humor is. You can laugh and weep many things out of existence, which the most scathing argument could not touch. Humor and irony are differing phases of one thing. Humor is gentle: irony is severe. When employed by a moralist of capacity, both are excoriating the same vice. "The Biglow Papers" are Lowell at his best in many ways. They are rustic: they are rimmed with dew and daylight. They run a long, a very long scale, from the cricket voice to the battle trump. Hosea Biglow is delicious. His words smell of the hay, but sometimes of the cannon powder. He is homely but virile. The Yankee dialect was fit for all kinds of fields—fields plowed of corn and fields plowed by cannon. The humor of these poems is at times simply riotous. Where the flamboyancy of the press is satirized; where the hoity-toity affectation of Latin is made butt of laughter; where the Rev. Homer Wilbur, with his scholar's obtuseness and sedateness, is done to the dot, and makes one's sides ache with laughter; where the old style of statement and the

new are contrasted, in the Introduction to the second series of "Biglow Papers": where instead of saying "Man fell," the incident is rendered "Individual was precipitated," and "A great crowd came to see" is "A vast concourse was assembled to witness;" or where in "Mr. Hosea Biglow's Speech in March Meeting" Mr. Biglow attempts to subside but cannot. He "tries to avide it." He does all kinds of stating and finally misstates it. He does all ways, but not, so to say, endways. He can't end. His "subjic" has plainly the better of him. Most of us have sometimes been in Hosea's shoes, and so the shoe pinches with delightful democracy.

These things, to use a phrase of Hosea himself, would make "Uncle Samwell laf." In these poems and prose essays, Lowell turns loose a perfect riot of Yankee humor in the interest of righteousness. In the one case against the Mexican War; in the other case in behalf of the Union cause; in both instances in behalf of human freedom and human rights. If God is for man as man (as who does not know he is?) what sane man can doubt that Lowell's "Biglow Papers" were warring in behalf of God?

Thet air flag's a leetle rotten,  
Hope it aint your Sunday's best;—  
Fact! it takes a sight o' cotton  
To stuff out a soger's chest:

Sence we farmers hev to pay fer 't,  
Ef you must wear humps like these,  
Sposin' you should try salt hay fer 't,  
It would du ez slick ez grease.

'Twouldn't suit them Southun fellers,  
They're a drefle grasin' set,  
We must ollers blow the bellers  
Wen they want their irons het;  
Maybe it's all right ez preachin',  
But *my* narves it kind o' grates,  
Wen I see the overreachin'  
O' them nigger-drivin' States.

Them thet rule us, them slave-traders,  
Haint they cut a thunderin' swarth  
(Helped by Yankee renegaders)  
Thru the vartu o' the North!  
We begin to think it's nater  
To take sarse an' not be riled;—  
Who'd expect to see a tater  
All on eend at bein' biled?

Ez fer war, I call it murder,—  
There you hev it plain an' flat;  
I don't want to go no furder  
Than my Testymont fer that;  
God hez sed so plump an' fairly,  
It's ez long ez it is broad,  
An' you've gut to git up airly  
Ef you want to take in God.  
• • • • •

No? Hez he? He haint, though? Wut? Voted agin  
him?  
Ef the bird of our country could ketch him, she'd  
skin him;  
I seem's though I see her, with wrath in each quill,  
Like a chancery lawyer, afilin' her bill,  
An' grindin' her talents ez sharp ez all nater,  
To pounce like a writ on the back o' the traitor.  
Forgive me, my friends, ef I seem to be het,

But a crisis like this must with vigor be met;  
 Wen an Arnold the star-spangled banner bestains,  
 Holl Fourth o' Julys seem to bile in my veins.

“Here we stan’ on the Constitution, by thunder!  
 It’s a fact o’ wich ther’s bushils o’ proofs;  
 Fer how could we trample on ’t so, I wonder,  
 Ef ’t worn’t that it’s ollers under our hoofs?”

Sez John C. Calhoun, sez he;

“Human rights haint no more

Right to come on this floor,

No more’n the man in the moon,” sez he.

“The North haint no kind o’ bisness with nothin’,  
 An’ you’ve no idee how much bother it saves;  
 We aint none riled by their frettin’ an’ frothin’,  
 We’re *used* to layin’ the string on our slaves,”

Sez John C. Calhoun, sez he;—

Sez Mister Foote,

“I should like to shoot

The holl gang, by the gret horn spoon!” sez he.

“Freedom’s Keystone is Slavery, that ther’s no doubt on,  
 It’s sutthin’ that’s—wha’ d’ ye call it?—divine,—  
 An’ the slaves that we ollers *make* the most out on  
 Air them north o’ Mason an’ Dixon’s line,”

Sez John C. Calhoun, sez he;—

“Fer all that,” sez Mangum,

“Twould be better to hang ‘em

An’ so git red on ‘em soon,” sez he.

“The mass ough’ to labor an’ we lay on soffies,  
 Thet’s the reason I want to spread Freedom’s aree;

“It’ll break up the Union, this talk about freedom,  
 An’ your fact’ry gals (soon ez we split)’ll make head,  
 An’ gittin’ some Miss chief or other to lead ‘em,

‘Ill go to work raisin’ pr’miscoous Ned,”

Sez John C. Calhoun, sez he;—

“Yes, the North,” sez Colquitt,

“If we Southerners all quit,

Would go down like a busted balloon,” sez he.

“Jest look wut is doin’, wut annyky’s brewin’  
 In the beautiful clime o’ the olive an’ vine,  
 All the wise aristoxys is tumblin’ to ruin,  
 An’ the sankylots drorin’ an’ drinkin’ their wine,”  
 Sez John C. Calhoun, sez he;—  
 “Yes,” sez Johnson, “in France  
 They’re beginnin’ to dance  
 Beelzebub’s own rigadoon,” sez he.

“The South’s safe enough, it don’t feel a mite skeery,  
 Our slaves in their darkness an’ dut air tu blest  
 Not to welcome with proud hallylugers the ery  
 Wen our eagle kicks yourn from the naytional nest.”

. . . . .

I du believe in Freedom’s cause,  
 Ez fur away ez Payris is;  
 I love to see her stick her claws  
 In them infarnal Phayrisees;  
 It’s wal enough agin a king  
 To dror resolves an’ triggers,—  
 But libbaty’s a kind o’ thing  
 Thet don’t agree with niggers.

I du believe the people want  
 A tax on teas an’ coffees,  
 Thet nothin’ aint extravagunt,—  
 Purvidin’ I’m in office;  
 Fer I hev loved my country sence  
 My eye-teeth filled their sockets,  
 An’ Uncle Sam I reverence,  
 Partic’larly his pockets.

I du believe in *any* plan  
 O’ levyin’ the taxes,  
 Ez long ez, like a lumberman,  
 I git jest wut I axes:

I go free-trade thru thick an' thin,  
Because it kind o' rouses  
The folks to vote,—an' keeps us in  
Our quiet custom-houses.

I du believe it's wise an' good  
To sen' out furrin missions,  
Thet is, on sartin understood  
An' orthodox conditions;—  
I mean nine thousan' dolls. per ann.,  
Nine thousan' more fer outfit,  
An' me to recommend a man  
The place 'ould jest about fit.

I do believe in special ways  
O' prayin' an' convartin';  
The bread comes back in many days,  
An' buttered, tu, fer sartin;  
I mean in preyin' till one busts  
On wut the party chooses,  
An' in convartin' public trusts  
To very privit uses.

I du believe hard coin the stuff  
Fer 'lectioneers to spout on;  
The people's ollers soft enough  
To make hard money out on;  
Dear Uncle Sam pervides fer his,  
An' gives a good-sized junk to all,—  
I don't care *how* hard money is,  
Ez long ez mine's paid punctooal.

I du believe with all my soul  
In the gret Press's freedom,  
To pint the people to the goal  
An' in the traces lead 'em;  
Palsied the arm thet forges yokes  
At my fat contracts squintin',  
An' withered be the nose thet pokes  
Inter the gov'ment printin'!

I du believe that I should give  
 Wut's his'n unto Cæsar;  
 Fer it's by him I move an' live,  
 Frum him my bread an' cheese air;  
 I du believe that all o' me  
 Doth bear his superscription,—  
 Will, conscience, honor, honesty,  
 An' things o' thet description.

I du believe in prayer an' praise  
 To him thet hez the grantin'  
 O' jobs,—in every thin' thet pays,  
 But most of all in CANTIN';  
 This doth my cup with marcies fill,  
 This lays all thought o' sin to rest,—  
 I *don't* believe in princerples,  
 But O, I *du* in interest.

I du believe in bein' this  
 Or thet, ez it may happen  
 One way or t'other hendiest is  
 To ketch the people nappin';  
 It aint by princerples nor men  
 My prudunt course is steadied,—  
 I scent wich pays the best, an' then  
 Go into it baldheaded.

. . . . .

There's one thing I'm in doubt about; in order to be Pres-  
 idunt,  
 It's absolutely ne'ssary to be a Southern residunt;  
 The Constitution settles thet, an' also thet a feller  
 Must own a nigger o' some sort, jet black, or brown, or  
 yellter.

Now I haint no objections agin particklar climes,  
 Nor agin ownin' anythin' (except the truth sometimes),  
 But, ez I haint no capital, up there among ye, maybe,  
 You might raise funds enough fer me to buy a low-priced  
 baby,  
 An' then, to suit the No'thern folks, who feel obleeged to say  
 They hate an' cuss the very thing they vote fer every day,

Say you're assured I go full butt fer Liberty's diffusion  
 An' made the purchis on'y jest to spite the Institootion;—  
 But, golly! there's the currier's hoss upon the pavement  
 pawin'!

I'll be more 'xplicit in my next.

Yourn,

BIRD OF FREDUM SAWIN.

We have now a tolerably fair chance of estimating how the balance sheet stands between our returned volunteer and glory. Supposing the entries to be set down on both sides of the account in fractional parts of one hundred, we shall arrive at something like the following result :

B. SAWIN, Esq., in account with (BLANK) GLORY.

Cr.	Dr.
By loss of one leg.....	20
" do one arm.....	15
" do four fingers.....	5
" do one eye.....	10
" the breaking of six ribs.....	6
" having served under Colonel Cushing one month.....	44
	—
	100
To one 675th three cheers in Faneuil Hall.....	30
" do. do. on occasion of presentation of sword to Colonel Wright.....	25
" one suit of gray clothes(ingeniously unbecoming) .	15
" musical entertainments (drum and fife six months) ..	5
" one dinner after return .....	1
" chance of pension..	1
" privilege of drawing longbow during rest of natural life .....	23
	—
	100

E. E.

REV. HOMER WILBUR to UNCLE SAMUEL, Dr.

To his share of work done in Mexico on partnership account, sundry jobs, as below:	
“ killing, maiming, and wounding about 5,000 Mexicans .....	\$2.00
“ slaughtering one woman carrying water to wounded .....	.10
“ extra work on two different Sabbaths (one bombardment and one assault), whereby the Mexicans were prevented from defiling themselves with the idolatries of high mass .....	3.50
“ throwing an especially fortunate and Protestant bombshell into the Cathedral at Vera Cruz, whereby several female Papists were slain at the altar.....	.50
“ his proportion of cash paid for conquered territory .....	1.75
“ do. do. for conquering do.....	1.50
“ manuring do. with new superior compost called “American Citizen”.....	.50
“ extending the area of freedom and Protestantism .....	.01
“ glory.....	.01
	<hr/> \$9.87

For riotous humor, which, without exaggeration, makes a body think of chief humorist, John Falstaff, read this:

DEAR SIR,—You wish to know my notions  
 On sartin pints thet rile the land;  
 There's nothin' thet my natur so shuns  
 Ez bein' mum or underhand;  
 I'm a straight-spoken kind o' creetur  
 Thet blurts right out wut's in his head,  
 An' ef I've one pecooler feetur,  
 It is a nose thet wont be led.

So, to begin at the beginnin'  
 An' come direclly to the pint,  
 I think the country's underpinnin'  
 Is some consid'ble out o' jint;

I aint agoin' to try your patience  
 By tellin' who done this or that,  
 I don't make no insinooations,  
 I jest let on I smell a rat.

Thet is, I mean, it seems to me so,  
 But, ef the public think I'm wrong,  
 I wont deny but wut I be so,—  
 An', fact, it don't smell very strong;  
 My mind's tu fair to lose its balance  
 An' say wich party hez most sense;  
 There may be folks o' greater talence  
 Thet can't set stiddier on the fence.

I'm an eclectic; ez to choosin'  
 'Twixt this an' thet, I'm plaguy lawth;  
 I leave a side thet looks like losin',  
 But (wile there's doubt) I stick to both;  
 I stan' upon the Constitution,  
 Ez preudunt statesmun say, who've planned  
 A way to git the most profusion  
 O' chances ez to *ware* they'll stand.

Ez fer the war, I go agin it,—  
 I mean to say I kind o' du,—  
 Thet is, I mean thet, bein' in it,  
 The best way wuz to fight it thru;  
 Not but wut abstract war is horrid,  
 I sign to thet with all my heart,—  
 But civlyzation *doos* git forrid  
 Sometimes upon a powder-cart.

. . . . .

I don't apprrove o' givin' pledges;  
 You'd ough' to leave a feller free,  
 An' not go knockin' out the wedges  
 To ketch his fingers in the tree;  
 Pledges air awfle breachy cattle  
 Thet preudunt farmers don't turn out,—  
 Ez long 'z the people git their rattle,  
 Wut is there fer 'm to grout about?

Ez to the slaves, there's no confusion  
 In *my* idees consarnin' them,—  
*I* think they air an Institution,  
 A sort of—yes, jest so,—ahem:  
*Do I* own any? Of my merit  
 On thet pint you yourself may jedge.  
 All is, I never drink no sperit,  
 Nor I haint never signed no pledge.

Ez to my princerples, I glory  
 In hevin' nothin' o' the sort;  
*I* aint a Wig, *I* aint a Tory,  
 I'm jest a candidate, in short.

. . . . .

P. S.

Ez we're a sort o' privateerin',  
 O' course, you know, it's sheer an' sheer,  
 An' there is sutthin' wuth your hearin'  
 I'll mention in *your* privit ear;  
 Ef you git *me* inside the White House,  
 Your head with ile I'll kin' o' 'nint  
 By gittin' *you* inside the Light-house  
 Down to the eend o' Jaalam Pint.

An' ez the North hez took to brustlin'  
 At bein' scrouged frum off the roost,  
 I'll tell ye wut'll save all tusslin'  
 An' give our side a harsome boost.

All this for the rights of man. To make selection is fairly impossible. These papers are like the sky. We want it all. Quaint humor which sees the point and makes us see it too; humor which has moral purpose, stout as pikemen, and drives that purpose into our hearts as though the push of the planet were behind it. Those doc-

trines, ground-grown, heaven-grown, are the very marrow of the New England which had come from the days unafraid of any peril. These humors fight. They are scant men of peace. They laugh and rush on to get the chance to die. You feel the man behind the jest. You know how stout a lover of man is talking. If you drink with Hosea Biglow you will need drink the essence of democracy. Man is man when Hosea is shakin' hands.

These quotations have been made from the First Series of "The Biglow Papers," and are rollicking and drastic by turns. I am inclined to think that the Second Series, as Lowell himself thought, is better than the First. They have more "natur" and as much fiery invective humor. They are audacious and contagious.

I doubt if ever a more signal triumph for humor as remedial agent has been in evidence than these "Biglow Papers." They caught the ear and eye of the people, of the *demos*; and so caught the thought and heart of the people. They were words which sounded everywhere. They were found in workshops, and sung on the streets. They caught slavery under holds, and threw it. Not anything, either said or written, had the vogue as an opponent of that malignant evil, that these humor-soaked papers had. Anti-

slavery was, in them, unapologetic. Slavery was put on the defensive, a thing slavery had never known. The proslavery strength had been that it had assumed that every foe to itself was an innovator, an iconoclast; that slavery had the right—the ground was hers, and the law was hers. Now, by a poet's trick of humor and of tears, slavery found its weakness and wickedness disclosed. God and a man had made what was hostile to man and God appear so. So that as an evidence of the cyclopic power of humor as a moral instrument, Lowell stands well-nigh alone. It is as if Burns had turned his plow-field speech against existing evils. The language of the common people in *Hosea Biglow* for the first time became the knight-errant of the common man. Laughter became stouter than a sword arm and sharper than a sword blade. And once again wisdom was justified of her children. Yankee Hosea had his say, and helped with his laugh to laugh slavery into the whirlpool of blood from which was no issuance.

## LOWELL—HIS GOSPEL OF NATURE LOVE

WE are slowly and surely coming around to God's way of thinking. We are like Moses "slow of speech," and like the disciples "slow of heart." Is not that word of the Christ very pitiful? "Slow of heart." That is so apt a characterization and so bitter a one. He who used it had no irony in his voice or thought. Had Socrates said it, the words would have cut deep as a knife. Christ's kindness took the hurt from the cut; but slow of heart we are. We feel the appositeness of this descriptive term. Slow to catch the accents of the Voice: slow to see what the Eyes are looking at and from; slow to get the hid meanings, and, what is sadly true, slow to get the meanings not hid at all. We are coming to see how beautiful God thinks nature is. This is at the heart of the modern passion for outdoors. God made it. God loves it. God thinks his own garden fair.

This, I think, we shall conclude when the matter has been gone over with care, that nature love is now a deeper thing than it was long since. I do not here discuss the literary aspects of nature love,

having gone over that beautiful ground in an article entitled “The Literature of Nature.” But this I hold true, that we moderns have come to nature from God’s side. Since Jesus pointed out the lilies and sparrows we have had our eyes riveted on them. He was a man of the outdoors. The mountain, the sky, the sea, the night, the field, the radiant sunset sky, the ripening wheat, the growing corn, the walking through fields nodding to the summer wind, the torrents swollen with the rain, the rush of wind and rain when storm was on, the vineyard with its purple clusters and its emerald lanceolate of leaves—these he loved and these he named. The mountain he climbed, the sea he sailed and walked on, the sand he thoughtfully trod upon along the seashore, the gray morning when the light widened toward day and he was walking on the strand and looking at the fisher boat—we see and love them. Do we not see that age on age, as we behold Jesus to be God, and worship him as such, the nature love of him will be communicative? We cannot be quit of it. He loved the flowers and grainfields, the yellow wilderness, the rocks, the snowy mountain and mournful sea, the beautiful undulation of daylight on the hill, the valley cup, the pyramidal acclivity, the mountain cliff, the rising sun, the sweaty noon. What his hands

have touched, that do we his followers love. This is the genesis, I think beyond dispute, of modern nature love. It is rooted in God and Christ. We feel all things his, and love them after his fashion—less, truly, but similar.

If this view be just, then poetry of nature will be in the sphere of theology, and straitly religious. We feel God in things; we see him in things. Certain it is that such as give us appetency for nature, and an honest look at nature, are generous helpers to the heart. For myself I gladly acknowledge that Ruskin, Emerson, Blackmore, Conrad, Tennyson, and all others who have given me glimpses of nature things, have given me glimpses of God. Nature is a beautiful road to God. Not that nature love will of necessity engender God love—not that—but to the heart that cares for God, nature will be a method of approach and interpretation of the Almighty. We might change the phrasing of “*Thanatopsis*,” and express our fact better than Bryant has done:

To him who in the love of Nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, God speaks  
A various language.

This outdoor love is bound to increase. It is one way of getting a look at God’s face; and to get a look at God’s face is the rational goal of human desire. How beautiful it would have

been to have seen Christ look at the “lily of the field.” The Poet saw its loveliness and felt quiet, even unspeakable joy in it. Not too busy was the Son of man to stop and enjoy these sun tints rooted in the ground. Who that has seen wild wine-red poppies growing amidst the ripening wheat can ever forget that audacious riot of colors? I have seen this vision, with the sea for background; and who shall be equal to the telling of the beauty?

But poets render service to man and God when they take us by the hand down woodland paths, by prairie ways, by meandering streams, by sunset glades, by dawn-approaching mountains. They serve us on our religious side. *Æsthetics* climb to ethics. The lesser expands to the larger.

Lowell knew nature well and loved it much. His letters, as brought under book cover by Charles Eliot Norton, are bright with these delectations of his heart. He was meant for living in a tent, I think. He had been reared in the country suburbs of Boston town. He had acquired information first-hand from trees and birds and flowers. In his “Epistle to George William Curtis,” he tells how he had learned weather signs and to know birds by their flight and trees by their shape or by leaf and bark, and how he loved such lore above book-knowledge, and how roads, lake, stream, hillside, field, wood,

aster, golden-rod, and blue succory were to him a dear delight. The country was on him in the town.

In the Second Series of “The Biglow Papers” are some pastorals which will without doubt be immortal. They see so much; they say so much: they are the country lad, all eyes, all ears, a-waiting for the Spring. He feels the sap in his veins. He is crowded by the very thought of the contiguity of people. He wants nothing nearer than the sky. He thinks the bobolink is gladness with wings. He hears and roisters in the clatter of the blackbirds. He sees Spring take a run and jump from Winter into June. When I start out with Hosea of a morning I can feel the Spring dew wet my feet. He loves to walk out after dark when chores are done. Hosea, your hand, lad. You and I will walk under the stars together.

Read “Summer Storm”:

Untremulous in the river clear,  
Toward the sky’s image, hangs the imaged bridge;  
So still the air that I can hear  
The slender clarion of the unseen midge;  
Out of the stillness, with a gathering creep,  
Like rising wind in leaves, which now decreases,  
Now lulls, now swells, and all the while increases,  
The huddling trample of a drove of sheep  
Tilts the loose planks, and then as gradually ceases  
In dust on the other side; life’s emblem deep,  
A confused noise between two silences,  
Finding at last in dust precarious peace.

## LOWELL—HIS GOSPEL OF NATURE LOVE 63

On the wide marsh the purple-blossomed grasses  
Soak up the sunshine; sleeps the brimming tide,  
Save when the wedge-shaped wake in silence passes  
Of some slow water-rat, whose sinuous glide  
Wavers the long green sedge's shade from side to side;  
But up the west, like a rock-shivered surge,  
Climbs a great cloud edged with sun-whitened spray;  
Huge whirls of foam boil toppling o'er its verge,  
And falling still it seems, and yet it climbs alway.

Or listen to “The Birch-Tree” quiver:

Rippling through thy branches goes the sunshine,  
Among thy leaves that palpitate forever;  
Ovid in thee a pining Nymph had prisoned,  
The soul once of some tremulous inland river,  
Quivering to tell her woe, but, ah! dumb, dumb forever!  
  
While all the forest, witched with slumberous moonshine,  
Holds up its leaves in happy, happy silence,  
Waiting the dew, with breath and pulse suspended,—  
I hear afar thy whispering, gleamy islands,  
And track thee wakeful still amid the wide-hung silence.

Upon the brink of some wood-nestled lakelet,  
Thy foliage, like the tresses of a Dryad,  
Dripping about thy slim white stem, whose shadow  
Slopes quivering down the water's dusky quiet,  
Thou shrink'st as on her bath's edge would some startled  
Naiad.

Thou art the go-between of rustic lovers;  
Thy white bark has their secrets in its keeping;  
Reuben writes here the happy name of Patience,  
And thy lithe boughs hang murmuring and weeping  
Above her, as she steals the mystery from thy keeping.

Thou art to me like my beloved maiden,  
So frankly coy, so full of trembly confidences;  
Thy shadow scarce seems shade, thy pattering leaflets  
Sprinkle their gathered sunshine o'er my senses,  
And Nature gives me all her summer confidences.

Whether my heart with hope or sorrow tremble,  
 Thou sympathizest still; wild and unquiet,  
 I fling me down; thy ripple, like a river,  
 Flows valleyward, where calmness is, and by it  
 My heart is floated down into the land of quiet.

“Under the Willows” is replete with nature love and loving expression of it.

In “The Growth of the Legend” is this allusion to a pine to which all those in whose blood is the pine-tree passion will listen with delight:

Yes, the pine is the mother of legends; what food  
 For their grim roots is left when the thousand-yeared wood—  
 The dim-aisled cathedral, whose tall arches spring  
 Light, sinewy, graceful, firm-set as the wing  
 From Michael’s white shoulder—is hewn and defaced  
 By iconoclast axes in desperate waste,  
 And its wrecks seek the ocean it prophesied long,  
 Cassandra-like, crooning its mystical song?  
 Then the legends go with them,—even yet on the sea  
 A wild virtue is left in the touch of the tree,  
 And the sailor’s night-watches are thrilled to the core  
 With the lineal offspring of Odin and Thor.

Or who can fail to catch the moonlight’s silver tranquillity and mystic beauty ever remote and ever near and always kin to things unspeakable in this picture titled “Midnight”?—

The moon shines white and silent  
 On the mist, which, like a tide  
 Of some enchanted ocean,  
 O’er the wide marsh doth glide,  
 Spreading its ghost-like billows  
 Silently far and wide.

A vague and starry magic  
     Makes all things mysteries,  
 And lures the earth's dumb spirit  
     Up to the longing skies,—  
 I seem to hear dim whispers,  
     And tremulous replies.

The fireflies o'er the meadow  
     In pulses come and go;  
 The elm-trees' heavy shadow  
     Weighs on the grass below;  
 And faintly from the distance  
     The dreaming cock doth crow.

All things look strange and mystic,  
     The very bushes swell  
 And take wild shapes and motions,  
     As if beneath a spell,—  
 They seem not the same lilacs  
     From childhood known so well.

### “ Beaver Brook ” is sweet:

Hushed with broad sunlight lies the hill,  
     And, minuting the long day's loss,  
 The cedar's shadow, slow and still,  
     Creeps o'er its dial of gray moss.

Warm noon brims full the valley's cup,  
     The aspen's leaves are scarce astir,  
 Only the little mill sends up  
     Its busy, never-ceasing burr.

Climbing the loose-piled wall that hems  
     The road along the mill-pond's brink,  
 From 'neath the arching barberry-stems,  
     My footstep scares the shy chewink.

Beneath a bony buttonwood  
     The mill's red door lets forth the din;  
 The whitened miller, dust-imbued,  
     Flits past the square of dark within.

No mountain torrent's strength is here;  
 Sweet Beaver, child of forest still,  
 Heaps its small pitcher to the ear,  
 And gently waits the miller's will.

Get “To the Dandelion” by heart:

Dear common flower, that grow'st beside the way,  
 Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,  
 First pledge of blithesome May,  
 Which children pluck, and, full of pride, uphold,  
 High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they  
 An Eldorado in the grass have found,  
 Which not the rich earth's ample round  
 May match in wealth,—thou art more dear to me  
 Than all the prouder summer-blooms may be.

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the Spanish prow  
 Through the primeval hush of Indian seas,  
 Nor wrinkled the lean brow  
 Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease;  
 'Tis the Spring's largess, which she scatters now  
 To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand,  
 Though most hearts never understand  
 To take it at God's value, but pass by  
 The offered wealth with unrewarded eye.

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy;  
 To look at thee unlocks a warmer clime;  
 The eyes thou givest me  
 Are in the heart, and heed not space or time:  
 Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed bee  
 Feels a more summer-like warm ravishment  
 In the white lily's breezy tent,  
 His fragrant Sybaris, than I, when first  
 From the dark green thy yellow circles burst.

Then think I of deep shadows on the grass,—  
 Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,  
 Where, as the breezes pass,

The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways,—  
    Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,  
Or whiten in the wind,—of waters blue  
    That from the distance sparkle through  
Some woodland gap,—and of a sky above,  
    Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with  
    thee;  
The sight of thee calls back the robin's song,  
    Who, from the dark old tree  
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long,  
    And I, secure in childish piety,  
Listened as if I heard an angel sing  
    With news from heaven, which he could bring  
Fresh every day to my untainted ears,  
    When birds and flowers and I were happy peers.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,  
When thou, for all thy gold, so common art!  
    Thou teachest me to deem  
More sacredly of every human heart,  
    Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam  
Of heaven, and could some wondrous secret show,  
    Did we but pay the love we owe,  
And with a child's undoubting wisdom look  
    On all these living pages of God's book.

This expresses, poet-wise, the gospel of nature. And in "An Indian-Summer Reverie," which all said, and truly said, is as delicious a rendering of the romance of the Indian Summer as ever has been written; and could the Red Man appreciate the spirit of his hazy summer time he would be with joy elate to read such a poem as this. For

in this poem “Memory wanders like gleaning Ruth.”

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed cedar shadows  
 Drowse on the crisp, gray moss; the plowman's call  
 Creeps faint as smoke from black, fresh-furrowed  
 meadows;  
 The single crow a single caw lets fall;  
 And all around me every bush and tree  
 Says Autumn's here, and Winter soon will be,  
 Who snows his soft, white sleep and silence over all.

The birch, most shy and ladylike of trees,  
 Her poverty, as best she may, retrieves,  
 And hints at her foregone gentilities  
 With some saved relics of her wealth of leaves;  
 The swamp-oak, with his royal purple on,  
 Glare red as blood across the sinking sun,  
 As one who prouder to a falling fortune cleaves.

He looks a sachem, in red blanket wrapt,  
 Who, mid some council of the sad-garbed whites,  
 Erect and stern, in his own memories lapt,  
 With distant eye broods over other sights,  
 Sees the hushed wood the city's flare replace,  
 The wounded turf heal o'er the railway's trace,  
 And roams the savage Past of his undwindled rights.

The red-oak, softer-grained, yields all for lost,  
 And, with his crumpled foliage stiff and dry,  
 After the first betrayal of the frost,  
 Rebuffs the kiss of the relenting sky;  
 The chestnuts, lavish of their long-hid gold,  
 To the faint Summer, beggared now and old,  
 Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath her favoring eye.

The ash her purple drops forgivingly  
 And sadly, breaking not the general hush;  
 The maple-swamps glow like a sunset sea,  
 Each leaf a ripple with its separate flush;

## LOWELL—HIS GOSPEL OF NATURE LOVE 69

All round the wood's edge creeps the skirting blaze  
Of bushes low, as when, on cloudy days,  
Ere the rain falls, the cautious farmer burns his brush.

O'er yon low wall, which guards one unkempt zone,  
Where vines, and weeds, and scrub-oaks intertwine  
Safe from the plow, whose rough, discordant stone  
Is massed to one soft gray by lichens fine,  
The tangled blackberry, crossed and recrossed, weaves  
A prickly network of ensanguined leaves;  
Hard by, with coral beads, the prim black-alders shine.

Pillaring with flame this crumbling boundary,  
Whose loose blocks topple 'neath the plowboy's foot,  
Who, with each sense shut fast except the eye,  
Creeps close and scares the jay he hoped to shoot,  
The woodbine up the elm's straight stem aspires,  
Coiling it, harmless, with autumnal fires;  
In the ivy's paler blaze the martyr oak stands mute.

Below, the Charles—a stripe of nether sky,  
Now hid by rounded apple-trees, between  
Whose gaps the misplaced sail sweeps bellying by,  
Now flickering golden through a woodland screen,  
Then spreading out, at his next turn beyond,  
A silver circle like an inland pond—  
Slips seaward silently through marshes purple and green.

Dear marshes! vain to him the gift of sight  
Who cannot in their various incomes share,  
From every season drawn, of shade and light,  
Who sees in them but levels brown and bare;  
Each change of storm or sunshine scatters free  
On them its largess of variety,  
For Nature with cheap means still works her wonders rare.

In Spring they lie one broad expanse of green,  
O'er which the light winds run with glimmering feet;  
Here, yellower stripes track out the creek unseen,  
There, darker growths o'er hidden ditches meet;

## 70 LOWELL—HIS GOSPEL OF NATURE LOVE

And purpler stains show where the blossoms crowd,  
As if the silent shadow of a cloud  
Hung there becalmed, with the next breath to fleet.

All round, upon the river's slippery edge,  
Witching to deeper calm the drowsy tide,  
Whispers and leans the breeze-entangling sedge.  
• • • •

Flow on, dear river! not alone you flow  
To outward sight, and through your marshes wind;  
Fed from the mystic springs of long-ago,  
Your twin flows silent through my world of mind:  
Grow dim, dear marshes, in the evening's gray!  
Before my inner sight ye stretch away,  
And will forever, though these fleshly eyes grow blind.

These words and moods beat dimly upon our  
senses

Like the long surf upon the distant shore.

He avers:

A buttercup  
Could hold me for a day's delight.  
A bird could lift my fancy up  
To ether free from cloud or blight.

Note how he sees

The toothless sea mumbling.

And “Pictures from Appledore” contains some  
of the most vivid portraiture of sea cliff and sea  
sky and sea wave we shall find in reading all the  
poets' books:

How looks Appledore in a storm?  
I have seen it when its crags seemed frantic,  
Butting against the maddened Atlantic,  
When surge after surge would heap enorme,  
Cliffs of emerald topped with snow,  
That lifted and lifted and then let go

A great white avalanche of thunder,  
A grinding, blinding, deafening ire  
Monadnock might have trembled under;  
And the island, whose rock-roots pierce below  
To where they are warmed with the central fire,  
You could feel its granite fibers racked,  
As it seemed to plunge with a shudder and thrill  
Right at the breast of the swooping hill,  
And to rise again, snorting a cataract  
Of rage-froth from every cranny and ledge,  
While the sea drew its breath in hoarse and deep,  
And the next vast breaker curled its edge,  
Gathering itself for a mighty leap.

North, east, and south there are reefs and breakers,  
You would never dream of in smooth weathe.,  
That toss and gore the sea for acres,  
Bellowing and gnashing and snarling together;  
Look northward, where Duck Island lies,  
And over its crown you will see arise,  
Against a background of slaty skies,  
A row of pillars still and white  
That glimmer and then are out of sight,  
As if the moon should suddenly kiss,  
While you crossed the gusty desert by night,  
The long colonnades of Persepolis,  
And then as sudden a darkness should follow  
To gulp the whole scene at single swallow,  
The city's ghost, the drear, brown waste,  
And the string of camels, clumsy-paced:—  
Look southward for White Island light,  
The lantern stands ninety feet o'er the tide;  
There is first a half-mile of tumult and fight,  
Of dash and roar and tumble and fright,  
And surging bewilderment wild and wide,  
Where the breakers struggle left and right,  
Then a mile or more of rushing sea,  
And then the lighthouse slim and lone;  
And whenever the whole weight of ocean is thrown

Full and fair on White Island head,  
A great mist-jotun you will see  
Lifting himself up silently  
High and huge o'er the lighthouse top,  
With hands of wavering spray outspread,  
Groping after the little tower,  
That seems to shrink and shorten and cower,  
Till the monster's arms of a sudden drop,  
And silently and fruitlessly  
He sinks again into the sea.

Or read this sea similitude:

And the lost fragments of the storm  
Like the shattered wrecking from a fight at sea.

In “The Discovery” is a description which makes you see the honey gold of a moorland torrent as you have yourself oftentimes beheld it among New England hills.

And “The Maple,” see how she bedecks herself.

Or feel the mood caught in “The Recall.”

Enough has been cited to quite justify the claim of James Russell Lowell to be one of God’s nature interpreters; and reading after him we shall learn the holy gift of seeing, and may chance in time the holy gift of saying.

We shall hug up to God a little who hug up to Lowell, nature-poet, much.

## LOWELL—HIS PASSION FOR MAN

SOME one has noted that the last expression of Lowell as essayist is bound up in that volume (mostly addresses, and very noble ones they are, and make all Americans proud of him, delivered mainly while he was our ambassador at St. James) which was by Lowell entitled "Democracy." He was not backslider from our simple life and homelier, because he was in later years so much the devotee of England, land and friend. He was at heart, and lifelong, a democrat. He had fast faith in man because he was man. He saw how God set store by man, and inferred therefrom the value of each apart from circumstance. To the tracing of this bias of his heart and intelligence I wish to devote a little space.

This is a Christian thought. We shall agree in this, I take it. At least, I hope we may. God made man and God redeemed man; and therein God magnified man. Here is the impregnable fortress of democracy. Aside from this, man has not made his stand and cannot. Here he is safe.

A race of nobles may die out,  
A royal line may leave no heir;  
Wise Nature sets no guards about  
Her pewter plate and wooden ware.

But they fail not, the kinglier breed,  
 Who starry diadems attain;  
 To dungeon, ax, and stake succeed  
 Heirs of the old heroic strain.

For the fine gift of seeing man, and loving him when seen, we shall go far to find a readier statement and manlier than in “Agassiz.”

In “Freedom” read:

Freedom is recreated year by year,  
 In hearts wide open on the Godward side,  
 In souls calm-cadenced as the whirling sphere,  
 In minds that sway the future like a tide.  
 No broadest creeds can hold her, and no codes;  
 She chooses men for her august abodes,  
 Building them fair and fronting to the dawn.

And had the genius to be men

is how Lowell puts it, and ’tis a great putting. I love that line.

In “Ode to France”:

Slow are the steps of Freedom, but her feet  
 Turn never backward: hers no bloody glare;  
 Her light is calm, and innocent, and sweet,  
 And where it enters there is no despair:  
 Not first on palace and cathedral spire  
 Quivers and gleams that unconsuming fire;  
 While these stand black against her morning skies,  
 The peasant sees it leap from peak to peak  
 Along his hills; the craftsman’s burning eyes  
 Own with cool tears its influence mother-meek;  
 It lights the poet’s heart up like a star.

Man is, like Dante,

Himself unshaken as the sky.

The strength of man is in his sense of himself.  
In "Prometheus" it is writ:

I am still Prometheus.

Man is more than Constitutions

is a thunder peal for men. In "On the Capture of Certain Fugitive Slaves near Washington," Lowell lays down the law of the larger fealty of man to man:

We owe allegiance to the State; but deeper, truer, more,  
To the sympathies that God hath set within our spirit's  
core;—

Our country claims our fealty; we grant it so, but then  
Before Man made us citizens, great Nature made us men.

He's true to God who's true to man; wherever wrong is done  
To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath the all-beholding  
sun,

That wrong is also done to us; and they are slaves most base,  
Whose love of right is for themselves, and not for all their  
race.

God works for all. . . .

Or in another poem, "An Incident in a Railroad Car":

There is no wind but soweth seeds  
Of a more true and open life,  
Which burst, unlooked-for, into high-souled deeds,  
With wayside beauty rife.

We find within these souls of ours  
Some wild germs of a higher birth,  
Which in the poet's tropic heart bear flowers  
Whose fragrance fills the earth.

Within the hearts of all men lie  
These promises of wider bliss,  
Which blossom into hopes that cannot die,  
In sunny hours like this.

All that hath been majestical  
In life or death, since time began,  
Is native in the simple heart of all,  
The angel heart of man.

And thus, among the untaught poor,  
Great deeds and feelings find a home,  
That cast in shadow all the golden lore  
Of classic Greece and Rome.

O, mighty brother-soul of man,  
Where'er thou art, in low or high,  
Thy skyey arches with exulting span  
O'er-roof infinity!

All thoughts that mold the age begin  
Deep down within the primitive soul,  
And from the many slowly upward win  
To one who grasps the whole:

In his wide brain the feeling deep  
That struggled on the many's tongue  
Swells to a tide of thought, whose surges leap  
O'er the weak thrones of wrong.

The value of the soul and “That vast pity which almost makes men die” is described in “The Forlorn.”

Man-soul is not so great with Lowell as with Bunyan, yet it is justly great. “Sub Pondere” knows that—

The hope of Truth grows stronger, day by day;  
I hear the soul of Man around me waking,  
Like a great sea, its frozen fetters breaking,  
And flinging up to heaven its sunlit spray,  
Tossing huge continents in scornful play,  
And crushing them, with din of grinding thunder,  
That makes old emptinesses stare in wonder;  
The memory of a glory passed away  
Lingers in every heart, as, in the shell,  
Resounds the bygone freedom of the sea,  
And every hour new signs of promise tell  
That the great soul shall once again be free,  
For high, and yet more high, the murmurs swell  
Of inward strife for truth and liberty.

In another sonnet he says:

Great Truths are portions of the soul of man;  
Great souls are portions of Eternity;  
Each drop of blood that e'er through true heart ran  
With lofty message, ran for thee and me;  
For God's law, since the starry song began,  
Hath been, and still for evermore must be,  
That every deed which shall outlast Time's span  
Must goad the soul to be erect and free;  
Slave is no word of deathless lineage sprung,—  
Too many noble souls have thought and died,  
Too many mighty poets lived and sung,  
And our good Saxon, from lips purified  
With martyr-fire, throughout the world hath rung  
Too long to have God's holy cause denied.

And in one of those upleaps of speech and perception Lowell shouts like a trumpeter at a triumph:

We Sinais climb and know it not.

“The Present Crisis” has not many equals as a proclamation of the dignity of the soul:

When a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad earth's  
aching breast  
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to  
west,  
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels the soul within him  
climb  
To the awful verge of manhood, as the energy sublime  
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the thorny stem of  
Time.

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots the instantaneous  
throe,  
When the travail of the Ages wrings earth's systems to and  
fro;  
At the birth of each new Era, with a recognizing start,  
Nation wildly looks at nation, standing with mute lips apart,  
And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child leaps beneath the  
Future's heart.

“Columbus,” a noble poem, feels:

The old world is effete; there man with man  
Jostles, and, in the brawl for means to live,  
Life is trod under foot,—Life, the one block  
Of marble that's vouchsafed wherfrom to carve  
Our great thoughts, white and godlike, to shine down  
The future, Life, the irredeemable block,  
Which one o'erhasty chisel-dint oft mars,  
Scanting our room to cut the features out  
Of our full hope, so forcing us to crown  
With a mean head the perfect limbs, or leave  
The god's face glowing o'er a satyr's trunk,  
Failure's brief epitaph.

Yes, Europe's world  
Reels on to judgment; there the common need,  
Losing God's sacred use, to be a bond  
'Twixt Me and Thee, sets each one scowlingly  
O'er his own selfish hoard at bay; no state,  
Knit strongly with eternal fibers up  
Of all men's separate and united weals,

Self-poised and sole as stars, yet one as light,  
Holds up a shape of large Humanity  
To which by natural instinct every man  
Pays loyalty exulting, by which all  
Mold their own lives, and feel their pulses filled  
With the red fiery blood of the general life,  
Making them mighty in peace, as now in war  
They are, even in the flush of victory, weak,  
Conquering that manhood which should them subdue.

Man must come on his way. The Old World must have its door open out to let man come to his own. Manhood must win and rule. In "A Glance Behind the Curtain," we are told:

No man is born into the world, whose work  
Is not born with him; there is always work,  
And tools to work withal, for those who will;  
And blessed are the horny hands of toil!

So man as man, not ashamed of himself nor of his toil, we love, as the poet loves him, at his work; for the blessing stays upon those hands that toil.

Yet not to go farther but to take a look at such a man as died at his work—hero work of giving chance to all men to be workers and to be men—to take a full-face look at Lincoln in the "Commemoration Ode," which is of man and for man. Its sovereign worth, however, will always remain, I think, the poet's perception of the bulk of Lincoln and his portrait drawn of him there when scarce the blood was dry upon his hateful wounds and before the tears which wet the

cheeks of all the best of women and men were diminished by a single tear. Of this ode we must in reason say that nothing so poised, so strong, so farseeing, so apt, so democratic, so music-drenched has been written of this martyr son of America as this. I love to come slowly by and let this vision of a man this poet drew, slowly cast its shadow on my life. It is as if a prairie had climbed high into a mountain. In him is both breadth and height. The “Commemoration Ode” will to all the years that lift sunrise on this dear land of ours be the proof beyond a hesitation of Lowell’s passion for man.

## LOWELL—HIS GOSPEL OF ASPIRATION AND RESOLVE

“I WILL arise and go to my father” is passed into the select company of immortal phrases since Jesus gave it place in the incomparable parable. The prodigal began his new sane life with that phrase on his lips and in his will. Since men have been prodigals, which is now a long while, the prologue to the return has been the high resolve. The lonely, homesick, starving lad, lean, lank, bedraggled, tattered as a winter oak, through his bloodshot eyes saw his home, and wanted it, saw his home, and aspired toward it, and then resolved for it. And his words—we hear them now and we shall hear them ever.

They are trumpet words. They are preamble to a saved life. The lost life is drifting into the past tense when a man hungers and resolves. There is, therefore, a holy gospel in aspiration and resolution.

Such as help us to aspire do greatly help us. Such as help us to resolve do still more greatly help us. When we fall in company of such as make us see, however faintly, the better—see it as a dim line of mountains, very far and pathetically uncertain,

and yet see so as to kindle the thought of mountains—by that company are we qualified as if angels had accompanied with us. The poetry of inspiration is very blessed poetry. I recall through years those voices—prose passages and poems—which swam across my life like a summer cloud across a burnt and weary plain. Bernard of Cluny's “Jerusalem the Golden” was such. Thomas Olivers's “The God of Abrah'm Praise” was such. Read this from Bernard, and try your heart upon it, and see if it spreads wing, and know, if it does not, the heart is needing of repair:

Brief life is here our portion;  
Brief sorrow, short-lived care;  
The life that knows no ending,  
The tearless life, is there.  
O happy retribution!  
Short toil, eternal rest;  
For mortals and for sinners  
A mansion with the blest!

And now we fight the battle,  
But then shall wear the crown  
Of full and everlasting  
And passionless renown:  
But He whom now we trust in  
Shall then be seen and known;  
And they that know and see him  
Shall have him for their own.

The morning shall awaken,  
The shadows shall decay,  
And each true-hearted servant  
Shall shine as doth the day.

There God, our King and Portion,  
In fullness of his grace,  
Shall we behold forever,  
And worship face to face.

O sweet and blessed country,  
The home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country  
That eager hearts expect!  
Jesus, in mercy bring us  
To that dear land of rest;  
Who art, with God the Father,  
And Spirit, ever blest.

For thee, O dear, dear country,  
Mine eyes their vigils keep;  
For very love, beholding  
Thy happy name, they weep.  
The mention of thy glory  
Is unction to the breast,  
And medicine in sickness,  
And love, and life, and rest.

O one, O only mansion,  
O paradise of joy!  
Where tears are ever banished,  
And smiles have no alloy;  
The Lamb is all thy splendor,  
The Crucified thy praise;  
His laud and benediction  
Thy ransomed people raise.

With jasper glow thy bulwarks,  
Thy streets with emerald blaze;  
The sardius and the topaz  
Unite in thee their rays;  
Thine ageless walls are bonded  
With amethyst unpriced;  
Thy saints build up its fabric,  
And the corner-stone is Christ.

Thou hast no shore, fair ocean;  
 Thou hast no time, bright day:  
 Dear fountain of refreshment  
     To pilgrims far away:  
 Upon the Rock of ages  
     They raise thy holy tower;  
 Thine is the victor's laurel,  
     And thine the golden dower.

Jerusalem the golden,  
     With milk and honey blest,  
 Beneath thy contemplation  
     Sink heart and voice oppressed:  
 I know not, O I know not  
     What social joys are there;  
 What radiancy of glory,  
     What light beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion,  
     All jubilant with song,  
 And bright with many an angel,  
     And all the martyr throng:  
 The Prince is ever in them,  
     The daylight is serene;  
 The pastures of the blessed  
     Are decked in glorious sheen.

There is the throne of David;  
     And there, from care released,  
 The song of them that triumph,  
     The shout of them that feast;  
 And they who, with their Leader,  
     Have conquered in the fight,  
 Forever and forever  
     Are clad in robes of white.

O sweet and blessed country,  
     The home of God's elect!  
 O sweet and blessed country  
     That eager hearts expect!

Jesus, in mercy bring us  
To that dear land of rest;  
Who art, with God the Father,  
And Spirit, ever blest.

I think “The God of Abrah’m Praise” among the eagle wings to wear upon the soul. If anybody were to say, “It is an ode than which Pindar, nor Collins, nor Keats, nor Lowell, has written a nobler,” he could not be severely criticised by any who had blood in their brain. And if anybody were to say it was the noblest ode in the English speech, wise people could do nothing more drastic than demur. They could not find it in their hearts to be vitriolic. Read it now and answer for yourself:

The God of Abrah’m praise,  
Who reigns enthroned above  
Ancient of everlasting days,  
And God of love:  
Jehovah, great I AM,  
By earth and heaven confessed;  
I bow and bless the sacred name,  
Forever blest.

The God of Abrah’m praise,  
At whose supreme command  
From earth I rise, and seek the joys  
At his right hand:  
I all on earth forsake,  
Its wisdom, fame, and power;  
And him my only portion make,  
My shield and tower.

The God of Abrah’m praise,  
Whose all-sufficient grace

Shall guide me all my happy days

In all his ways;

He calls a worm his friend,

He calls himself my God!

And he shall save me to the end,

Through Jesus' blood.

He by himself hath sworn,

I on his oath depend;

I shall, on eagle wings upborne,

To heaven ascend:

I shall behold his face,

I shall his power adore,

And sing the wonders of his grace

For evermore.

Though nature's strength decay,

And earth and hell withstand,

To Canaan's bounds I urge my way,

At his command;

The watery deep I pass,

With Jesus in my view;

And through the howling wilderness

My way pursue.

The goodly land I see,

With peace and plenty blest;

A land of sacred liberty,

And endless rest.

There milk and honey flow,

And oil and wine abound;

And trees of life forever grow,

With mercy crowned.

There dwells the Lord our King,

The Lord our Righteousness,

Triumphant o'er the world and sin,

The Prince of peace;

On Zion's sacred height,

His kingdom still maintains;

And, glorious, with his saints in light

Forever reigns.

He keeps his own secure;  
    He guards them by his side;  
Arrays in garments white and pure  
    His spotless bride;  
With streams of sacred bliss,  
    With groves of living joys,  
With all the fruits of paradise,  
    He still supplies.

Before the great Three One  
    They all exulting stand,  
And tell the wonders he hath done  
    Through all their land:  
The listening spheres attend,  
    And swell the growing fame;  
And sing, in songs which never end,  
    The wondrous name.

The God who reigns on high  
    The great archangels sing,  
And, "Holy, holy, holy," cry,  
    "Almighty King!  
Who was and is the same,  
    And evermore shall be;  
Jehovah, Father, great I AM,  
    We worship thee."

Before the Saviour's face  
    The ransomed nations bow;  
O'erwhelmed at his almighty grace,  
    Forever new:  
He shows his prints of love,—  
    They kindle to a flame,  
And sound through all the worlds above,  
    The slaughtered Lamb!

The whole triumphant host  
    Give thanks to God on high;  
"Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,"  
    They ever cry:

Hail, Abrah'm's God, and mine!—  
I join the heavenly lays,—  
All might and majesty are thine,  
And endless praise.

And I recall with a lunging pulse even now what a thrill of heart I felt when on a summer evening, with a summer sunset drawing on and summer odors drugging my senses, and the wholesome summer sky owning my heart, I saw the cross held up and the eternal daylight dawn when I read, for the first, Henry Lyte's

Hold Thou thy cross before my closing eyes;  
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows  
flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

The first foot on the first hill-slant that slants toward the mountain top, is epochal. We must aspire lest we die and be buried along the dusty level plain. Try your life on Browning's very noble poem of aspiration, "A Grammarian's Funeral":

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,  
Singing together.  
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,  
Each in its tether  
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,  
Cared for till cock-crow:  
Look out if yonder be not day again  
Rimming the rock-row!

That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,  
    Rarer, intenser,  
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
    Chafes in the censer.

Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;  
    Seek we sepulture  
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,  
    Crowded with culture!  
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;  
    Clouds overcome it;  
No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
    Circling its summit.

Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights;  
    Wait ye the warning?  
Our low life was the level's and the night's:  
    He's for the morning.

Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,  
    'Ware the beholders!  
This is our master, famous, calm and dead,  
    Borne on our shoulders.

. . . . .  
That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
    Sees it and does it:  
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
    Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,  
    His hundred's soon hit:  
This high man, aiming at a million,  
    Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need the next,  
    Let the world mind him!  
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
    Seeking shall find him.

. . . . .  
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:  
    Hail to your purlieus,  
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
    Swallows and curlews!

Here's the top-peak; the multitude below  
    Live, for they can, there:  
This man decided not to Live but Know—  
    Bury this man there?  
Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds  
    form,  
    Lightnings are loosened,  
Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,  
    Peace let the dew send!  
Lofty designs must close in like effects:  
    Loftily lying,  
Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,  
    Living and dying.

Hear those drums a-beating, and lift eyes and  
face toward the morning mountain crest!

This is a “glorious gospel,” if I may borrow  
Paul’s delighted phrase for anything other than  
that to which he applied it. I will, but with sub-  
tractions. There is no gospel “glorious” like his,  
and ours, the same as his, “The glorious gospel  
of the blessed God.” Yet is the gospel of uplook  
and uplift rightly glorious.

Lowell is of those who are anointed to look up.  
His were hungry eyes. Had you fallen in with  
him along a country way you would have found  
him looking more up than down though he saw  
both down and up. We always see the down true  
and clear but give scant heed to the upper. Such  
as aspire make us aspire. Poets sing of what they  
dream of. The hungry heart provokes a hungry  
voice. Aspirings are not lip-born: they are soul-

born. Bayard Taylor brings word of “ear-born music”; but aspiration is not this. Aspiration is soul-born music.

Lowell’s “Longing” says this in a fashion:

Still, through our paltry stir and strife,  
Glows down the wished Ideal,  
And Longing molds in clay what Life  
    Carves in the marble Real;  
To let the new life in, we know,  
    Desire must ope the portal;—  
Perhaps the longing to be so  
    Helps make the soul immortal.

Longing is God’s fresh heavenward will  
    With our poor earthward striving;  
We quench it that we may be still  
    Content with merely living;  
But, would we learn that heart’s full scope  
    Which we are hourly wronging,  
Our lives must climb from hope to hope  
    And realize our longing.

Ah! let us hope that to our praise  
    Good God not only reckons  
The moments when we tread his ways,  
    But when the spirit beckons,—  
That some slight good is also wrought  
    Beyond self-satisfaction,  
When we are simply good in thought,  
    Howe’er we fail in action.

This, to be sure, is not the highest grade of aspiration, nor interpretation of it, but hints the theme, and tries its lower keys.

“The Moon” is better longing:

My soul was like the sea,  
 Before the moon was made,  
 Moaning in vague immensity,  
 Of its own strength afraid,  
 Unrestful and unstaid.  
 Through every rift it foamed in vain,  
 About its earthly prison,  
 Seeking some unknown thing in pain,  
 And sinking restless back again,  
 For yet no moon had risen;  
 Its only voice a vast dumb moan,  
 Of utterless anguish speaking,  
 It lay unhopefully alone,  
 And lived but in an aimless seeking.  
 So was my soul.

The note of aspiration, the unconscious tide  
 rush of soul, is pictured in a fragment entitled  
 “Remembered Music,” which is instinct with  
 the loneliness and vagueness and vastness of the  
 homeless heart:

Thick-rushing, like an ocean vast  
 Of bison the far prairie shaking,  
 The notes crowd heavily and fast  
 As surfs, one plunging while the last  
 Draws seaward from its foamy breaking.  
 Or in low murmurs they began,  
 Rising and rising momently,  
 As o'er a harp Æolian  
 A fitful breeze, until they ran  
 Up to a sudden ecstasy.  
 And then, like minute drops of rain  
 Ringing in water silverly,  
 They lingering dropped and dropped again,  
 Till it was almost like a pain  
 To listen when the next would be.

But “The Pioneer” sings this song in a much better fashion. This speaks the robust aspiring of an unfetterable soul:

What man would live coffined with brick and stone,  
Imprisoned from the influences of air,  
And cramped with selfish landmarks everywhere,  
When all before him stretches, furrowless and lone,  
The unmapped prairie none can fence or own?

What man would read and read the selfsame faces,  
And, like the marbles which the windmill grinds,  
Rub smooth forever with the same smooth minds,  
This year retracing last year’s, every year’s, dull traces,  
When there are woods and un-man-stifled places?

What man o’er one old thought would pore and pore,  
Shut like a book between its covers thin  
For every fool to leave his dog’s-ears in,  
When solitude is his, and God for evermore,  
Just for the opening of a paltry door?

What man would watch life’s oozy element  
Creep Letheward forever, when he might  
Down some great river drift beyond men’s sight,  
To where the undethronèd forest’s royal tent  
Broods with its hush o’er half a continent?

What man with men would push and altercate,  
Piecing out crooked means for crooked ends,  
When he can have the skies and woods for friends,  
Snatch back the rudder of his undismantled fate,  
And in himself be ruler, church, and state?

Cast leaves and feathers rot in last year’s nest,  
The wingèd brood, flown thence, new dwellings plan;  
The serf of his own Past is not a man;  
To change and change is life, to move and never rest;—  
Not what we are, but what we hope, is best.

The wild, free woods make no man halt or blind;  
 Cities rob men of eyes and hands and feet,  
 Patching one whole of many incomplete;  
 The general preys upon the individual mind,  
 And each alone is helpless as the wind.

Each man is some man's servant; every soul  
 Is by some other's presence quite discrowned;  
 Each owes the next through all the imperfect round,  
 Yet not with mutual help; each man is his own goal,  
 And the whole earth must stop to pay his toll.

Here, life the undiminished man demands;  
 New faculties stretch out to meet new wants;  
 What Nature asks, that Nature also grants;  
 Here man is lord, not drudge, of eyes and feet and  
 hands,  
 And to his life is knit with hourly bands.

Resolution sad and stern is writ in “On a Portrait of Dante by Giotto”:

Can this be thou who, lean and pale,  
 With such immutigable eye  
 Didst look upon those writhing souls in bale,  
 And note each vengeance, and pass by  
 Unmoved, save when thy heart by chance  
 Cast backward one forbidden glance,  
 And saw Francesca, with child's glee,  
 Subdue and mount thy wild-horse knee  
 And with proud hands control its fiery prance?

With half-drooped lids, and smooth, round brow,  
 And eye remote, that only sees  
 Fair Beatrice's spirit wandering now  
 In some sea-lulled Hesperides,  
 Thou movest through the jarring street,  
 Secluded from the noise of feet  
 By her gift-blossom in thy hand,  
 Thy branch of palm from Holy Land;—  
 No trace is here of ruin's fiery sleet.

Yet there is something round thy lips  
That prophesies the coming doom,  
The soft, gray herald-shadow ere the eclipse  
Notches the perfect disk with gloom;  
A something that would banish thee,  
And thine untamed pursuer be,  
From men and their unworthy fates,  
Though Florence had not shut her gates,  
And Grief had loosed her clutch and let thee free.

“Above and Below” is call to see and do,  
which all men do well to hear. Let us hear it:

## I

O dwellers in the valley-land,  
Who in deep twilight grope and cower,  
Till the slow mountain’s dial-hand  
Shortens to noon’s triumphal hour,—  
While ye sit idle, do ye think  
The Lord’s great work sits idle too?  
That light dare not o’erleap the brink  
Of morn, because ‘tis dark with you?

Though yet your valleys skulk in night,  
In God’s ripe fields the day is cried,  
And reapers, with their sickles bright,  
Troop, singing, down the mountain-side.  
Come up, and feel what health there is  
In the frank Dawn’s delighted eyes,  
As, bending with a pitying kiss,  
The night-shed tears of Earth she dries!

The Lord wants reapers: O, mount up,  
Before night comes, and says,—“Too late!”  
Stay not for taking scrip or cup,  
The Master hungers while ye wait;  
’Tis from these heights alone your eyes  
The advancing spears of day can see,  
Which o’er the eastern hilltops rise,  
To break your long captivity.

## II

Lone watcher on the mountain-height!  
 It is right precious to behold  
 The first long surf of climbing light  
     Flood all the thirsty east with gold;  
 But we, who in the shadow sit,  
     Know also when the day is nigh.  
 Seeing thy shining forehead lit  
     With his inspiring prophecy.

Thou hast thine office; we have ours;  
     God lacks not early service here,  
 But what are thine eleventh hours  
     He counts with us for morning cheer;  
 Our day, for Him, is long enough,  
     And when he giveth work to do,  
 The bruised reed is amply tough  
     To pierce the shield of error through.

But not the less do thou aspire  
     Light's earlier messages to preach;  
 Keep back no syllable of fire,—  
     Plunge deep the rowels of thy speech.  
 Yet God deems not thine aeried sight  
     More worthy than our twilight dim,—  
 For meek Obedience, too, is Light,  
     And following that is finding Him.

The negative of right and dominant resolve is set to music in “Rhœcus,” which, besides its moral inculcation, is so daintily done a bit of Greek mythology as to make its insertion half a duty. But the limits will not allow all this melody to have way here, but enough must sing to give the lesson sway:

A youth named Rhœcus, wandering in the wood,  
 Saw an old oak just trembling to its fall,  
 And, feeling pity of so fair a tree,

He propped its gray trunk with admiring care,  
And with a thoughtless footstep loitered on.  
But, as he turned, he heard a voice behind  
That murmured "Rhœcus!" "Twas as if the leaves,  
Stirred by a passing breath, had murmured it,  
And, while he paused bewildered, yet again  
It murmured "Rhœcus!" softer than a breeze.  
He started and beheld with dizzy eyes  
What seemed the substance of a happy dream  
Stand there before him, spreading a warm glow  
Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.  
It seemed a woman's shape, yet all too fair  
To be a woman, and with eyes too meek  
For any that were wont to mate with gods.  
All naked like a goddess stood she there,  
And like a goddess all too beautiful  
To feel the guilt-born earthliness of shame.  
"Rhœcus, I am the Dryad of this tree,"  
Thus she began, dropping her low-toned words  
Serene, and full, and clear, as drops of dew,  
"And with it I am doomed to live and die;  
The rain and sunshine are my caterers,  
Nor have I other bliss than simple life;  
Now ask me what thou wilt, that I can give,  
And with a thankful joy it shall be thine."

Then Rhœcus, with a flutter at the heart,  
Yet, by the prompting of such beauty, bold,  
Answered: "What is there that can satisfy  
The endless craving of the soul but love?  
Give me thy love, or but the hope of that  
Which must be evermore my spirit's goal."  
After a little pause she said again,  
But with a glimpse of sadness in her tone,  
"I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous gift;  
An hour before the sunset meet me here."  
And straightway there was nothing he could see  
But the green glooms beneath the shadowy oak,  
And not a sound came to his straining ears

But the low trickling rustle of the leaves,  
And far away upon an emerald slope  
The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

Now, in those days of simpleness and faith,  
Men did not think that happy things were dreams  
Because they overstepped the narrow bourn  
Of likelihood, but reverently deemed  
Nothing too wondrous or too beautiful  
To be the guerdon of a daring heart.  
So Rhœucus made no doubt that he was blest,  
And all along unto the city's gate  
Earth seemed to spring beneath him as he walked,  
The clear, broad sky looked bluer than its wont,  
And he could scarce believe he had not wings,  
Such sunshine seemed to glitter through his veins  
Instead of blood, so light he felt and strange.

Young Rhœucus had a faithful heart enough,  
But one that in the present dwelt too much,  
And, taking with blithe welcome whatsoe'er  
Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound in that,  
Like the contented peasant of a vale,  
Deemed it the world, and never looked beyond.  
So, haply meeting in the afternoon  
Some comrades who were playing at the dice,  
He joined them, and forgot all else beside.

The dice were rattling at the merriest,  
And Rhœucus, who had met but sorry luck,  
Just laughed in triumph at a happy throw,  
When through the room there hummed a yellow bee  
That buzzed about his ear with down-dropped legs  
As if to light. And Rhœucus laughed and said,  
Feeling how red and flushed he was with loss,  
“By Venus! does he take me for a rose?”  
And brushed him off with rough, impatient hand.  
But still the bee came back, and thrice again  
Rhœucus did beat him off with growing wrath.  
Then through the window flew the wounded bee,

And Rhœcus, tracking him with angry eyes,  
Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly  
Against the red disk of the setting sun,—  
And instantly the blood sank from his heart,  
As if its very walls had caved away.  
Without a word he turned, and, rushing forth,  
Ran madly through the city and the gate,  
And o'er the plain, which now the wood's long shade,  
By the low sun thrown forward broad and dim,  
Darkened well-nigh unto the city's wall.

Quite spent and out of breath he reached the tree,  
And, listening fearfully, he heard once more  
The low voice murmur “Rhœcus!” close at hand:  
Whereat he looked around him, but could see  
Naught but the deepening glooms beneath the oak.  
Then sighed the voice, “Oh, Rhœcus! nevermore  
Shalt thou behold me or by day or night,  
Me, who would fain have blessed thee with a love  
More ripe and bounteous than ever yet  
Filled up with nectar any mortal heart:  
But thou didst scorn my humble messenger,  
And sent'st him back to me with bruised wings.  
We spirits only show to gentle eyes,  
We ever ask an undivided love,  
And he who scorns the least of Nature's works  
Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from all.  
Farewell! for thou canst never see me more.”

Then Rhœcus beat his breast, and groaned aloud,  
And cried, “Be pitiful! forgive me yet  
This once, and I shall never need it more!”  
“Alas!” the voice returned, “'tis thou art blind,  
Not I unmerciful; I can forgive,  
But have no skill to heal thy spirit's eyes;  
Only the soul hath power o'er itself.”  
With that again there murmured “Nevermore!”  
And Rhœcus after heard no other sound,  
Except the rattling of the oak's crisp leaves,  
Like the long surf upon a distant shore,

Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and down.  
 The night had gathered round him: o'er the plain  
 The city sparkled with its thousand lights,  
 And sounds of revel fell upon his ear  
 Harshly and like a curse; above, the sky,  
 With all its bright sublimity of stars,  
 Deepened, and on his forehead smote the breeze;  
 Beauty was all around him and delight,  
 But from that eve he was alone on earth.

**“The Oak” is gnarled with resolution:**

What gnarled stretch, what depth of shade, is his!  
 There needs no crown to mark the forest's king;  
 How in his leaves outshines full summer's bliss!  
 Sun, storm, rain, dew, to him their tribute bring,  
 Which he with such benignant royalty  
 Accepts, as overpayeth what is lent;  
 All nature seems his vassal proud to be,  
 And cunning only for his ornament.

How towers he, too, amid the billowed snows,  
 An unquelled exile from the summer's throne,  
 Whose plain, uncinctured front more kingly shows,  
 Now that the obscuring courtier leaves are flown.  
 His boughs make music of the winter air,  
 Jeweled with sleet, like some cathedral front  
 Where clinging snowflakes with quaint art repair  
 The dints and furrows of time's envious brunt.

How doth his patient strength the rude March wind  
 Persuade to seem glad breaths of summer breeze,  
 And win the soil that fain would be unkind,  
 To swell his revenues with proud increase!  
 He is the gem; and all the landscape wide  
 (So doth his grandeur isolate the sense)  
 Seems but the setting, worthless all beside,  
 An empty socket, were he fallen thence.

So, from oft converse with life's wintry gales,  
 Should man learn how to clasp with tougher roots  
 The inspiring earth;—how otherwise avails  
 The leaf-creating sap that sunward shoots?  
 So every year that falls with noiseless flake  
 Should fill old scars up on the stormward side,  
 And make hoar age revered for age's sake,  
 Not for traditions of youth's leafy pride.

So, from the pinched soil of a churlish fate,  
 True hearts compel the sap of sturdier growth,  
 So between earth and heaven stand simply great,  
 That these shall seem but their attendants both;  
 For nature's forces with obedient zeal  
 Wait on the rooted faith and oaken will;  
 As quickly the pretender's cheat they feel,  
 And turn mad Pucks to flout and mock him still.

Lord! all thy works are lessons,—each contains  
 Some emblem of man's all-containing soul;  
 Shall he make fruitless all thy glorious pains,  
 Delving within thy grace an eyeless mole?  
 Make me the least of thy Dodona-grove,  
 Cause me some message of thy truth to bring,  
 Speak but a word through me, nor let thy love  
 Among my boughs disdain to perch and sing.

“On a Bust of General Grant” makes granite  
 of the resolution of us all.

And this excerpt from “Ode to France” has all  
 the wonder of a mountain's breath amid its water-  
 falls:

Since first I heard our North wind blow,  
 Since first I saw Atlantic throw  
 On our fierce rocks his thunderous snow,  
 I loved thee, Freedom; as a boy

The rattle of thy shield at Marathon  
Did with a Grecian joy  
Through all my pulses run;  
But I have learned to love thee now  
Without the helm upon thy gleaming brow,  
A maiden mild and undefiled  
Like her who bore the world's redeeming child;  
And surely never did thy altars glance  
With purer fires than now in France;  
While, in their bright white flashes,  
Wrong's shadow, backward cast,  
Waves cowering o'er the ashes  
Of the dead, blaspheming Past,  
O'er the shapes of fallen giants,  
His own unburied brood,  
Whose dead hands clench defiance  
At the overpowering Good:  
And down the happy future runs a flood  
Of prophesying light;  
It shows an Earth no longer stained with blood,  
Blossom and fruit where now we see the bud  
Of Brotherhood and Right.

And “Columbus” is resolute as fate. We shall wait long and probably vainly to get such a life-size picture of this Admiral of the Ocean as Lowell has taken. I read it when I want to hear might mightier than the sea—a resolution strong as life:

The cordage creaks and rattles in the wind,  
With freaks of sudden hush.

But leave we that strange sea music to hear Columbus speak:

Endurance is the crowning quality,  
And patience all the passion of great hearts;  
These are their stay, and when the leaden world  
Sets its hard face against their fateful thought,  
And brute strength, like a scornful conqueror,  
Clangs his huge mace down in the other scale,  
The inspired soul but flings his patience in,  
And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe,—  
One faith against a whole earth's unbelief,  
One soul against the flesh of all mankind.

Thus ever seems it when my soul can hear  
The voice that errs not; then my triumph gleams,  
O'er the blank ocean beckoning, and all night  
My heart flies on before me as I sail;  
Far on I see my lifelong enterprise,  
Which rose like Ganges mid the freezing snows  
Of a world's sordidness, sweep broadening down,  
And, gathering to itself a thousand streams,  
Grow sacred ere it mingle with the sea;  
I see the ungated wall of chaos old,  
With blocks Cyclopean hewn of solid night,  
Fade like a wreath of unreturning mist  
Before the irreversible feet of light;—  
And lo, with what clear omen in the east  
On day's gray threshold stands the eager dawn,  
Like young Leander rosy from the sea  
Glowing at Hero's lattice!

#### One day more

These muttering shoalbrains leave the helm to me.  
God, let me not in their dull ooze be stranded;  
Let not this one frail bark, to hollow which  
I have dug out the pith and sinewy heart  
Of my aspiring life's fair trunk, be so  
Cast up to warp and blacken in the sun,  
Just as the opposing wind 'gins whistle off  
His cheek-swollen mates, and from the leaning mast  
Fortune's full sail strains forward!

One poor day!—

Remember whose and not how short it is!  
It is God's day, it is Columbus's.  
A lavish day! One day, with life and heart,  
Is more than time enough to find a world.

“To W. L. Garrison” shall kindle manly resolve:

In a small chamber, friendless and unseen,  
Toiled o'er his types one poor, unlearned young man;  
The place was dark, unfurnished, and mean;—  
Yet there the freedom of a race began.

Help came but slowly; surely no man yet  
Put lever to the heavy world with less:  
What need of help? He knew how types were set,  
He had a dauntless spirit, and a press.

Such earnest natures are the fiery pith,  
The compact nucleus round which systems grow!  
Mass after mass becomes inspired therewith,  
And whirls impregnate with the central glow.

O Truth! O Freedom! how are ye still born  
In the rude stable, in the manger nursed!  
What humble hands unbar those gates of morn  
Through which the splendors of the New Day burst!

And in “An Incident of the Fire at Hamburg” we can but feel the aspiration of a faith that sees and claims:

The tower of old Saint Nicholas soared upward to the skies,  
Like some huge piece of Nature's make, the growth of centuries;  
You could not deem its crowding spires a work of human art,  
They seemed to struggle lightward from a sturdy living heart.

Not Nature's self more freely speaks in crystal or in oak,  
Than, through the pious builder's hand, in that gray pile  
she spoke;

And as from acorn springs the oak, so, freely and alone,  
Sprang from his heart this hymn to God, sung in obedient  
stone.

• • • • •  
Surge leaping after surge, the fire roared onward red as  
blood,

Till half of Hamburg lay engulfed beneath the eddying  
flood;

For miles away, the fiery spray poured down its deadly rain,  
And back and forth the billows sucked, and paused, and  
burst again.

From square to square with tiger leaps panted the lustful fire,  
The air to leeward shuddered with the gasps of its desire;  
And church and palace, which even now stood whelmed but  
to the knee,  
Lift their black roofs like breakers lone amid the whirling sea.

Up in his tower old Herman sat and watched with quiet  
look;

His soul had trusted God too long to be at last forsook;  
He could not fear, for surely God a pathway would unfold  
Through this red sea for faithful hearts, as once he did of old.

But scarcely can he cross himself, or on his good saint call,  
Before the sacrilegious flood o'erleaped the churchyard wall;  
And, ere a *pater* half was said, mid smoke and crackling  
glare,  
His island tower scarce juts its head above the wide despair.

Upon the peril's desperate peak his heart stood up sublime;  
His first thought was for God above, his next was for his  
chime;

“Sing now and make your voices heard in hymns of praise,”  
cried he,

“As did the Israelites of old, safe walking through the sea!

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“Through this red sea our God hath made the pathway safe  
to shore;  
Our promised land stands full in sight; shout now as ne'er  
before!”  
And as the tower came crashing down, the bells, in clear  
accord,  
Pealed forth the grand old German hymn,—“All good souls,  
praise the Lord!”

So let this aspiration swing its bells, ringing in  
the sky, now and ever, ever and now, “All good  
souls, praise the LORD!”

## LOWELL—HIS MORAL PASSION

ONE thing Lowell is rich in is moral passion. To him everything is ethical. That saved him from being culturist. Himself had as he wrote of another:

Some pilgrim stuff that hates all sham.

Governments, policies, religions all appeal to him according to their right or wrong. This is high praise for him, man and poet. We must love this in him. For this mood of his soul himself must speak as far as possible. In “On the Capture of Certain Fugitive Slaves near Washington,” his blood boils. Ours too.

Look on who will in apathy, and stifle they who can,  
The sympathies, the hopes, the words, that make man truly  
man;  
Let those whose hearts are dungeoned up with interest or  
with ease  
Consent to hear with quiet pulse of loathsome deeds like  
these!

I first drew in New England’s air, and from her hardy breast  
Sucked in the tyrant-hating milk that will not let me rest!

So “Ambrose,” which burns hot against all  
bigotry.

Lowell sees and says in “The Oak”:

Lord, all thy works are lessons.

“Extreme Unction” is less a passion against priest than against self:

Heaven’s light hath but revealed a track  
Whereby to crawl away from heaven.

Men think it is an awful sight  
To see a soul just set adrift  
On that drear voyage from whose night  
The ominous shadows never lift;  
But ’tis more awful to behold  
A helpless infant, newly born,  
Whose little hands unconscious hold  
The keys of darkness and of morn.

Mine held them once; I flung away  
Those keys that might have open set  
The golden sluices of the day,  
But clutch the keys of darkness yet;—  
I hear the reapers singing go  
Into God’s harvest; I, that might  
With them have chosen, here below  
Grope shuddering at the gates of night.

Nor are we to get at the depths of this passion by the hard-and-fast method of quotation. Passion is more often a perfume than a petal. As sunbeams slide in at closed shutters and between the lattice of summer leaves, so this moral element in Lowell glints in on all his poetry. In such a poem, for illustration, as “A Parable,”—a lyric sweet with spiritual insight, yet which would not, I take it, classify itself in usual thinking as a distinctly ethical poem, yet still is this song of heaven fairly dripping with the sunshine of ethicality.

The lesson inculcated is similar to “The Vision of Sir Launfal,” namely, that we shall not need to go far to find God. He is here as well as there. No expense account is contracted in hunting God up. His doings, his smiles, his reaching hand, his heavenly bread are all anear and not afar. Beautiful deeds of good are being wrought momently. Stars are here every night, and the sun every day; and the growing flowers and the growing children and the waxing of love, are these not daily occurrences? In the highest sense is this sort of inculcation ethical, though we may not see its ethicality like the blazon on the shield. Read the poem and get the Lowell method—the moral saturation.

The little daughter stands with the violet in her hand, held up for her father’s taking. We see all that. His face is clouded. He, bending, waits to kiss her, and is gone seeking for the voice of God. He journeys, thinking that God hath forgotten this world. Then a serious prophet, praying face to the ground looking for a sign, sees how

From out the rock’s hard bosom  
Sprang a tender violet.

Worn and footsore was the Prophet,  
When he gained the holy hill;  
“God has left the earth,” he murmured,  
“Here his presence lingers still.”

“God of all the olden prophets,  
Wilt thou speak with men no more?  
Have I not as truly served thee  
As thy chosen ones of yore?

“Hear me, guider of my fathers,  
Lo! a humble heart is mine;  
By thy mercy I beseech thee  
Grant thy servant but a sign!”

Bowing then his head, he listened  
For an answer to his prayer;  
No loud burst of thunder followed,  
Not a murmur stirred the air:—

But the tuft of moss before him  
Opened while he waited yet,  
And, from out the rock’s hard bosom,  
Sprang a tender violet.

“God! I thank thee,” said the Prophet;  
“Hard of heart and blind was I,  
Looking to the holy mountain  
For the gift of prophecy.

“Still thou speakest with thy children  
Freely as in old sublime;  
Humbleness, and love, and patience,  
Shall give empire over time.

“Had I trusted in my nature,  
And had faith in lowly things,  
Thou thyself wouldest then have sought me,  
And set free my spirit’s wings.

“But I looked for signs and wonders,  
That o’er men should give me sway;  
Thirsting to be more than mortal,  
I was even less than clay.

“Ere I entered on my journey,  
As I girt my loins to start,  
Ran to me my little daughter,  
The beloved of my heart;—

“In her hand she held a flower,  
Like to this as like may be,  
Which, beside my very threshold,  
She had plucked and brought to me.”

And so his prayer had answer which it had at the beginning of his quest, had he but known the answer to the prayer.

Or “A Legend of Brittany.” What is this but a lesson unlit by any smiling, and fierce with retribution? Lowell cannot be quit of his moralities. Feel this tense morality in Hosea.

Truth shall not fail. Its wings are strong and it can fly, a concept embodied in “The Falcon”:

I know a falcon swift and peerless  
As e'er was cradled in the pine;  
No bird had ever eye so fearless,  
Or wing so strong as this of mine.

The winds not better love to pilot  
A cloud with molten gold o'errun,  
Than him, a little burning islet,  
A star above the coming sun.

For with a lark's heart he doth tower,  
By a glorious upward instinct drawn;  
No bee nestles deeper in the flower  
Than he in the bursting rose of dawn.

No harmless dove, no bird that singeth,  
Shudders to see him overhead;  
The rush of his fierce swooping bringeth  
To innocent hearts no thrill of dread.

Let fraud and wrong and baseness shiver,  
For still between them and the sky  
The falcon Truth hangs poised forever  
And marks them with his vengeful eye.

“The Sower” is, to my thinking, the most thrilling poem Lowell has penned. I do not suggest it may be so to others; I simply express an individual thrill. The wonder, the beauty, the blindness, the lean hand, the sowing figure, the seed scattering against the wind, the voice, the rush as the hammering of the flail of words blind as blindness—really in this poem is some of the weird Poe atmosphere. As a fact this enticing poem is a sermon from a text, text and sermon both from Lowell:

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast  
of Truth.

For myself I profess that both sermon and truth are telling. I feel their serene veracity. The new time is something other than the old time; something bigger truly; but the old time, in Shakespeare’s apt phrasing,

Doth suffer a sea change  
Into something rich and strange.

We not only grow out of the past but outgrow our past. At first this poem would hardly have credentials as a minister at an altar; but it is no less.

Squeeze the poem to a pulp and the drops squeezed from it are moralities. We feel “Excalibur”:

I saw a Sower walking slow  
Across the earth, from east to west;  
His hair was white as mountain snow,  
His head drooped forward on his breast.

With shriveled hands he flung his seed,  
Nor ever turned to look behind;  
Of sight or sound he took no heed;  
It seemed he was both deaf and blind.

His dim face showed no soul beneath,  
Yet in my heart I felt a stir,  
As if I looked upon the sheath  
That once had clasped Excalibur.

I heard, as still the seed he cast,  
How, crooning to himself, he sung,—  
“I sow again the holy Past,  
The happy days when I was young.

“Then all was wheat without a tare,  
Then all was righteous, fair, and true;  
And I am he whose thoughtful care  
Shall plant the Old World in the New.

“The fruitful germs I scatter free,  
With busy hand, while all men sleep:  
In Europe now, from sea to sea,  
The nations bless me as they reap.”

Then I looked back along his path,  
And heard the clash of steel on steel,  
Where man faced man, in deadly wrath,  
While clanged the tocsin’s hurrying peal.

The sky with burning towns flared red,  
Nearer the noise of fighting rolled,  
And brothers’ blood, by brothers shed,  
Crept, curdling, over pavements cold.

Then marked I how each germ of truth  
Which through the dotard's fingers ran  
Was mated with a dragon's tooth  
Whence there sprang up an armèd man.

I shouted, but he could not hear;  
Made signs, but these he could not see;  
And still, without a doubt or fear,  
Broadcast he scattered anarchy.

Long to my straining ears the blast  
Brought faintly back the words he sung:—  
“I sow again the holy Past,  
The happy days when I was young.”

The “Commemoration Ode” is severe; so is the “Concord Ode”; so is “Under the Old Elm,” the gist of them being that God must mix his effort with man’s effort if a country is to grow and stay great and worthy to be loved.

“Under the Willows” is sermonic too, as witnesses such a telltale thought as his taking his being clean from God.

The moral passion will not let him go, but grips him fast as an iron grip.

Read “Wendell Phillips”:

He stood upon the world’s broad threshold; wide  
The din of battle and of slaughter rose;  
He saw God stand upon the weaker side,  
That sank in seeming loss before its foes;  
Many there were who made great haste and sold  
Unto the cunning enemy their swords,  
He scorned their gifts of fame, and power, and gold,  
And, underneath their soft and flowery words,  
Heard the cold serpent hiss; therefore he went  
And humbly joined him to the weaker part,

Fanatic named, and fool, yet well content  
So he could be the nearer to God's heart,  
And feel its solemn pulses sending blood  
Through all the widespread veins of endless good.

“Pictures from Appledore” is a bawny piece of writing filled with sea sky and sea wind and tatter of foam from the wild billows, bawny with the sprawl of rocks and spring of cliffs, and the bleak coast only splintery crags. A nature poem? Yes, gladly yes. But the ethical passion, here as otherwhere and everywhere with this poet, makes its call above the calling sea. Something besides the sea moans at Appledore.

And in “The Forlorn,” note how the moral quality submerges music and all beside:

The night is dark, the stinging sleet,  
Swept by the bitter gusts of air,  
Drives whistling down the lonely street,  
And stiffens on the pavement bare.

The street-lamps flare and struggle dim  
Through the white sleet-clouds as they pass,  
Or, governed by a boisterous whim,  
Drop down and rattle on the glass.

One poor, heartbroken, outcast girl  
Faces the east-wind's searching flaws,  
And, as about her heart they whirl,  
Her tattered cloak more tightly draws.

The flat brick walls look cold and bleak,  
Her bare feet to the sidewalk freeze:  
Yet dares she not a shelter seek,  
Though faint with hunger and disease.

The sharp storm cuts her forehead bare,  
And, piercing through her garments thin,  
Beats on her shrunken breast, and there  
Makes colder the cold heart within.

She lingers where a ruddy glow  
Streams outward through an open shutter,  
Adding more bitterness to woe,  
More loneliness to desertion utter.

One half the cold she had not felt  
Until she saw this gush of light  
Spread warmly forth, and seem to melt  
Its slow way through the deadening night.

She hears a woman's voice within,  
Singing sweet words her childhood knew,  
And years of misery and sin  
Furl off, and leave her heaven blue.

Her freezing heart, like one who sinks  
Outwearied in the drifting snow,  
Drowses to deadly sleep and thinks  
No longer of its hopeless woe:

Old fields, and clear blue summer days,  
Old meadows, green with grass and trees,  
That shimmer through the trembling haze  
And whiten in the western breeze,—

Old faces,—all the friendly past  
Rises within her heart again,  
And sunshine from her childhood cast  
Makes summer of the icy rain.

Enhaloed by a mild, warm glow,  
From all humanity apart,  
She hears old footsteps wandering slow  
Through the lone chambers of her heart.

Outside the porch before the door,  
Her cheek upon the cold, hard stone,  
She lies, no longer foul and poor,  
No longer dreary and alone.

Next morning something heavily  
Against the opening door did weigh,  
And there, from sin and sorrow free,  
A woman on the threshold lay.

A smile upon the wan lips told  
That she had found a calm release,  
And that, from out the want and cold,  
The song had borne her soul in peace.

For, whom the heart of man shuts out,  
Sometimes the heart of God takes in,  
And fences them all round about  
With silence mid the world's loud din.

In this chapter the effort has not been to take the poems distinctly ethical, but such as are indistinctly ethical. As genius is never a moment absent from Shakespeare, so the moral passion is never for a moment absent from Lowell.

Probably “The Singing Leaves” would be as far a remove from this moral passion as one could easily conjure up. It is a ballad. It is Lowell at his level best. It lilts as a bobolink. If any music is in the heart this ballad will set that heart singing.

The story of “The Singing Leaves” can hardly be told by me without shame, because any other voice than the poet’s own in this beautiful ballad makes discord. But to essay it. The king as he starts to Vanity Fair asks of each of his three

daughters, “What shall I bring you?” Whereupon each makes reply. The eldest asks for pearls and diamonds and rings of gold; the second for silks and a golden comb; while the youngest, she of the golden hair, asks for the singing leaves. And her king-father is wroth with her and thinks her less than king’s daughter in her request. What his elder daughters asked for was easy in the buying. Silks and gold combs and diamonds and rings are in every mart. But the singing leaves of the youngest girl’s request are nowhere to be bought. No merchant is found with these in stock. And so the king goes vainly asking of every tree:

“Oh, if you have ever a singing leaf  
I pray you give it me!”

When

The trees all kept their counsel,

and his quest was “very bootless,” Walter, the king’s page, made answer that himself could find the singing leaves if the king would promise to give the page the first thing which should meet him as he came home to his castle. “ ’Twill be my dog,” the king thought, and saw the sunny face of his youngest daughter with her tears washing her sunniness away if he came without her singing leaves, and made the promise. Then Walter the page took from his breast poems which had sung

from his heart. He loved the king's young daughter. She in turn loved him. And when the king came home and found first to greet him was she of the sunny face and hair, love had its way once more. Love was kinglier than kingly blood and name. This is the simple story of the Singing Leaves, simply told.

The singing ballad has lured me. I cannot keep its singing out. Like lute and voice of Walter the page, it has its way with us. But as touching moral passion, this ballad is instinct with it. The ballad teaches democracy. It is the lyric of love. It is the assertion of love's right and of love's regality. It convinces even the skeptical that love must be let run its way, and must not be hindered by pedigree of kings. It sings that Walter the page is princelier far than any king; for genius is his crown and kingdom. "He holds of his lute in fee." The freedom of genius and the freedom of love are moral passions not less than prayer.

Or the "Biglow Papers," are they not fierce with diatribe, with sword hack, with the lightning shooting arrows against wrong? Are they not eternized maledictions against evil? Do they not breathe the breath of God?

Lowell as amorist may or may not be brother to Herrick of "Hesperides"; but Lowell as moral

passionist must be set down as relative of that great Puritan who wrote:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O'er all th' Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundredfold, who having learned thy way  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

## LOWELL—THE GRAIL

### A STUDY OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY

THE likelihood is that “Sir Launfal” will be most enduring of Lowell’s poems. It is both a lyric and a romancist poem. It is both life and nature. June and winter are both there. Bleakness and gladness each makes music. The north wind trumpets, and the south wind whispers like a sleepy voice.

Less inequality is here than is usual with Lowell. It is beautiful and sublime. If the steadfast sublimity of the “Commemoration Ode” be wanting, the subject is so hospitable to higher thought as to lift the entire lyric into an oratorio. We may safely say that here Lowell is at his manly best.

The Holy Grail has ever blown spring breath on the poets’ hearts. Such as love the pure are readily accessible to this holy romance. The Grail was the Cup out of which the wine of the Last Supper was drunk and, as the legend runs, was brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathæa, and kept in watch of holy knights; but one keeper having thought uncleanly the Holy Grail vanished. Thereafter knightly quests were many in search

of this Holy Cup. Only the pure could find: only the pure could keep. We must allow this is a beautiful dream and, besides this, is a Christian dream. The holiness without which man is not acceptable to God is a Scripture ethical notion. You cannot find a trace of it in Greek ethics. It was a star which burned not in their sky.

Abbey's cartoons in Boston Library are noble works of art, and glow in memory like a setting sun; and they are descriptive of a life given over to the search for the Holy Grail. I love to look upon them. They make my heart ache to be better. The colors, crimson and lily white, are apt concepts; for the Christ makes white by the crimson of his blood. All else of life is lesser to this seeker of the Grail. He finds it if his heart is pure; he holds it if his hands are clean. So thus the pictures bloom, light-white, blood-red, with splendors enduring beyond the sunset's radiant tints.

Tennyson has Sir Galahad and Sir Percival; and in the exquisite "Idylls of the King," the Round Table of King Arthur is brought to naught by the best knights becoming seekers of the Grail. They left their sword and honest battle; left their king alone to keep the world against the lawless breeds of men, left him to fail, while they were making quest after a vision.

Doubtless this was the thought at which Sir

Launfal really looks, though, to be sure, no poet can give genesis of his poet speech. Poems come as the winds drift. The winds of God bring them. Yet may we speculate on the hid, uncertain intent. One thing may rest undisputed, namely, against this skyey Grail-search, and in behalf of honest serviceableness in this quest, is this poem to be construed. Such meaning renders this poem graciously effective.

Sir Launfal, having recorded the vow to make quest of the Sangreal, is reminded of his vow by a radiant day of radiant June. Youth is on him and on the world. You feel the lilt and lift and laughter of the visionary month when roses blow and wild grapes perfume the air with their sweet musk breath. The world is at its June:

And what is so rare as a day in June?  
Then, if ever, come perfect days;  
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,  
And over it softly her warm ear lays:  
Whether we look, or whether we listen,  
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;  
Every clod feels a stir of might,  
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,  
And, groping blindly above it for light,  
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;  
The flush of life may well be seen  
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;  
The cowslip startles in meadows green,  
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,  
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean  
To be some happy creature's palace;

The little bird sits at his door in the sun,  
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,  
And lets his illumined being o'errun  
With the deluge of summer it receives;  
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,  
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;  
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest,—  
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

Now is the high-tide of the year,  
And whatever of life hath ebbed away  
Comes flooding back with a rippy cheer,  
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay;  
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,  
We are happy now because God wills it;  
No matter how barren the past may have been,  
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves are green;  
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well  
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;  
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing  
That skies are clear and grass is growing;  
The breeze comes whispering in our ear,  
That dandelions are blossoming near,  
That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,  
That the river is bluer than the sky,  
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;  
And if the breeze kept the good news back,  
For other couriers we should not lack;  
We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing,—  
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,  
Warmed with the new wine of the year,  
Tells all in his lusty crowing!

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;  
Everything is happy now,  
Everything is upward striving;  
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true  
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,—  
'Tis the natural way of living.

His dreaming loudens into his call:

" My golden spurs now bring to me,  
 And bring to me my richest mail,  
 For to-morrow I go over land and sea  
 In search of the Holy Grail;  
 Shall never a bed for me be spread,  
 Nor shall a pillow be under my head,  
 Till I begin my vow to keep;  
 Here on the rushes will I sleep,  
 And perchance there may come a vision true  
 Ere day create the world anew."

Then he sleeps and dreams:

Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,  
 Slumber fell like a cloud on him,  
 And into his soul the vision flew.

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,  
 In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees,  
 The little birds sang as if it were  
 The one day of summer in all the year,  
 And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees:  
 The castle alone in the landscape lay  
 Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray:  
 'Twas the proudest hall in the North Countree,  
 And never its gates might opened be,  
 Save to lord or lady of high degree;  
 Summer besieged it on every side,  
 But the churlish stone her assaults defied;  
 She could not scale the chilly wall,  
 Though round it for leagues her pavilions tall  
 Stretched left and right,  
 Over hills and out of sight;  
 Green and broad was every tent,  
 And out of each a murmur went  
 Till the breeze fell off at night.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,  
 And through the dark arch a charger sprang,

Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,  
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright  
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all  
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall

In his siege of three hundred summers long,  
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,  
Had cast them forth: so, young and strong,  
And lightsome as a locust-leaf,  
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail,  
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

You feel Sir Launfal is elate as June. One blood runs in the veins of each. The strength, the hope, the joy, the rejoicing in the simple love of life, the rapture of robust strength, the dash across the surly drawbridge, the passing into the world of room for getting and for doing—all are here. June is in the heart and June is in the sky. The grim castle is like an outpost of winter, but challenges June to gladness of lark and song.

But at the threshold of his search for the Grail a loathsome sight shocked his sensibilities:

As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome gate,  
He was 'ware of a leper, crouched by the same,  
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate;  
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came;  
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,  
The flesh 'neath his armor 'gan shrink and crawl,  
And midway its leap his heart stood still  
Like a frozen waterfall;  
For this man, so foul and bent of stature,  
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,  
And seemed the one blot on the summer morn,—  
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

He cannot tarry from so large a quest to stay for such a common thing as dull disease. He searches for the Grail. His enterprise is heavenly; and this lazarus-house patient sends his stench abroad when such high deeds are in process! This, when we think of it, is a natural sentiment. The remote seems worthy: the near seems cheap. To people who have stood tranced upon the Transfiguration hill, how lean must look a common sick man on the descent. The ideal fascinates as the real does not. Reading poetry is more engaging than sweeping streets. Caring for the sick is not an exploit compared with being a crusader. Just this is the deadly peril of a good life. The common appears common. We all have to guard us against Sir Launfal's fallacy: we are all of his tendency. And so having flung, with ungenerous generosity, a gold coin for the leper's needs, Sir Launfal rides away from the diseased breath, to the hope and wildness of the June breath of roses and growing things. But

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:  
“Better to me the poor man’s crust,  
Better the blessing of the poor,  
Though I turn me empty from his door;  
That is no true alms which the hand can hold;  
He gives nothing but worthless gold  
Who gives from a sense of duty;  
But he who gives a slender mite,  
And gives to that which is out of sight,

That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty  
Which runs through all and doth all unite,—  
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,  
The heart outstretches its eager palms,  
For a god goes with it and makes it store  
To the soul that was starving in darkness before.”

Youth in its joy, living at its June, going for  
the Grail.

So flowers the June. And how princely does  
Sir Launfal ride; but the coin lies in the dust and  
the leper has no help. Whither must the knight  
ride to find the Holy Grail? Years pass. Sir Laun-  
fal is still at quest. It is winter now. June is  
dead, dead in the year and dead in Sir Launfal's  
life:

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,  
From the snow five thousand summers old;  
On open wold and hilltop bleak  
It had gathered all the cold,  
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;  
It carried a shiver everywhere  
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,  
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,  
And rattles and wrings  
The icy strings,  
Singing, in dreary monotone,  
A Christmas carol of its own,  
Whose burden still, as he might guess,  
Was, “Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!”

The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch  
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,  
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night

The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,  
Through the window-slits of the castle old,  
Build out its piers of ruddy light  
Against the drift of the cold.

When an alien at his own castle gate, Sir Launfal dreams, as he shivers, of summer climes where once again, as years agone, he was where youth and life were June. He hears:

"For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an alms;"—  
The happy camels may reach the spring,  
But Sir Launfal sees only the grawsome thing,  
The leper, lank as the rain-blanch'd bone,  
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone  
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas  
In the desolate horror of his disease.

And Sir Launfal said, "I behold in thee  
An image of Him who died on the tree;  
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,  
Thou also hast had the world's buffet and scorns,  
And to thy life were not denied  
The wounds in his hands and feet and side:  
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;  
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes  
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he  
Remembered in what a haughtier guise  
He had flung an alms to leprosie,  
When he girt his young life up in gilded mail  
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.  
The heart within him was ashes and dust;  
He parted in twain his single crust,  
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,  
And gave the leper to eat and drink,

"Twas a moldy crust of coarse brown bread,  
 'Twas water out of a wooden bowl,—  
 Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,  
 And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,  
 A light shone round about the place;  
 The leper no longer crouched at his side,  
 But stood before him glorified,  
 Shining and tall and fair and straight  
 As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—  
 Himself the Gate whereby men can  
 Enter the temple of God in Man.

• • • • •  
 "In many climes, without avail,  
 Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;  
 Behold it is here,—this cup which thou  
 Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;  
 This crust is my body broken for thee,  
 This water His blood that died on the tree;  
 The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
 In whatso we share with another's need;  
 Not what we give, but what we share,—  
 For the gift without the giver is bare;  
 Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—  
 Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

And thenceforth all he had was at the service of mankind:

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swound:—  
 "The Grail in my castle here is found!  
 Hang my idle armor up on the wall,  
 Let it be the spider's banquet hall;  
 He must be fenced with stronger mail  
 Who would seek and find the Holy Grail."

The castle gate stands open now,  
 And the wanderer is welcome to the hall  
 As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough;  
 No longer scowl the turrets tall,

The Summer's long siege at last is o'er;  
When the first poor outcast went in at the door,  
She entered with him in disguise,  
And mastered the fortress by surprise;  
There is no spot she loves so well on ground,  
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;  
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land  
Has hall and bower at his command;  
And there's no poor man in the North Countree  
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

Lowell has come to the heart of the matter. Practical Christianity is living as Christ lived, and loving as Christ loved. This poem embodies the ethics of the gospel. This Lowell saw; this Lowell sung. And may his song hearten good deeds while time endures! And beyond chance it will.

## LOWELL—THE CATHEDRAL

### A STUDY IN RELIGIOUS INADEQUACY

“THE CATHEDRAL” is Lowell’s sole poem in which the religious problem is frankly stated and plainly argued. As has been seen, the ethical aspects of religion Lowell treated in varying moods and with keen insight. The Puritan was unconsciously plying his shuttles. And we come to this explicit religious study with warming heart, big with hope. The poet, we feel, will have the Pisgah vision. We shall hear the great, brave word this day; and seer and prophet, the one who sees and the one who tells, will bring us help.

The pathos of “The Cathedral” is that such hopes are to be blighted. Religiously considered, “The Cathedral” is to my feeling, as also to my thinking, unsatisfactory in the extreme. I think it must prove so to anyone who believes with industry and strength in a divine Christ, and in a great Faith and a glorious Salvation. Some are so glad for crumbs under a poet’s table that they take a crumb and magnify it into a loaf. But if we are to ask the plain facts unlit by imagination we shall go away from “The Cathedral” saddened. Lowell did himself. I recall how many times since I was a

college lad, when I read this poem first, I have gone wandering through the cathedral music, for Lowell has hit upon the organ voice not once but often in this poem,—wandering, thinking there must be at the last, past all dim doubts and demurrings, a sudden last leap of glorious faith: and when the last sob of the organ melts from the cathedral arches we are left in the cathedral and not led into the sky. We are disappointed. We are sadly disappointed. There was room for the lift of eagle's wings; but they were not lifted. We left sunlight to enter the fane: we never recovered the lost sunlight. The poem might be entitled “The Lost Sunlight.” Himself was at a loss what to call his poem. He did name it “A Day at Chartres”; Field renamed it “The Cathedral.” Let us have a hand and name it once more, from the lost light of it, “The Lost Sunlight.”

The poem topic is the same as Browning's “Christmas Eve.” Epitomized, “Christmas Eve” is: The poet, driven by drench of rain to shelter in a little stuffy church whose door opened

with a scold  
Of the crazy hinge,

and disgusted with the scents and temperature, and the occupants and what they did and said—

Out of the little chapel I burst  
Into the fresh night air again,

but knows not in the end whether he had or had not left the church, whether all were dream but this: he had been in a place rancid to him at first, but as he left it in disgust, or thought he had, Christ came out.

Christ had been there; and then, with this strange blaze of glory-light upon his heart, all his previous disgust and pride of reasoning shrunk from him, as he saw how holy was the place and how inadequate all the reasonings which had left Christ less than God. Browning's "Christmas Eve" is an apocalypse.

To Lowell, a happy day unknowing care comes in memory. Such days cannot be forgot. He wandered free. His mind was blithe. He knew not whither his feet went, but they led him till he was confronted by a minster whose repose was noble as a sea cliff left inland by receding seas, which hears anon the lunges of the sea and longs for them with immitigable desire, feeling and hearing the vanished seas more than the noise of men. He looked and was thralled. The old architects had their way with him. He was Goth like them. He thrilled to the wonder of their aspiration which wrote itself down in spires that leaped into the sky and walls that built a barrier against a sea of years. The pile was grim—grim with the Norsemen and grim as Norsemen, men

of battle and the sea. Nothing airy light was here. No Greek flashlight of architecture like laughter. The cathedral was eloquent yet mute with the great thoughts which are eternal, such as life and doom and death. He looked; and the sense of creative genius of days and moods which made such noble structures possible, assailed his self-conceit, his little pride, his poise. He felt his age was a reciter, not a creator of eloquence. He was sobered, subdued, and browbeaten with a sense of menace. Himself was Puritan; and he thinks of his Puritan forbears who had deemed entering a Roman Catholic cathedral idolatrous. They were more granite than he. He was not larger than they, though this aspect did not impress the poet. He was not the man to slur those men for that. After the cathedral incense and dim window and robed priest he came out as one lost in thought.

So opens up this study of religion in Lowell's soul. This atrium, it will be seen, is much more stately than the porch of Browning's poem. But the poem here does not measure up to this stately prelude. We had thought in such a minster calm, we had had the sea-wave lift, toward or into heaven. Not so. His doubts come as Browning's came. Each has clear view of the critical attack on Christianity. Browning

plows through it seeing how inadequate it is; Lowell is befogged by it, never coming out from these critical fogbanks, drowsing in them rather.

None the less, however, does Lowell's study fit our thought. He represents an untriumphant mood of faith. The thing he takes; the road he does not see. He ends with that rather dreary and now hackneyed phrase of miracles being commonplace.

Lowell's religious faith is not vital. Of his religious life I do not speak. That is not fitting. He was chaste and strong and manly, a poet whose life was brother to the purest and the best. We must not fault him in his life. We gladden at the sight of it, as at the sight of the first flower of spring. He was the Christian ether; but he knew it not. His head had not, I take it, gotten where his heart had come.

In this cathedral where he sat and mingled with the worshiping, doubts take him by the throat. He felt regret. Is the old religion undone by the skeptic present? Is it a remnant of a darkened mood? Did fate or fear make God? Did ignorance minister to doubt until now faith is dead and only doubt is alive? At this juncture of his thought he saw a beldame kneeling telling her beads, whereat his spirit jeered though, sanely,

but a moment. His better second thought was that whatever touches life with the upward impulse has in it something of God because God may certainly be affirmed to be in whatever gives freedom or exalts or that consoles and sweetens and makes humble.

He feels them happy who wander not beyond the succor of the household faith. Her lowly kneeling, in a moment, brings the poet to his knees; and he had what the apostle named faith, "the evidence of things not seen," though he had not that glorious faith "which is the substance of things hoped for." His vision was momentary, passing swift as an arrow's flight. And then his equivocal mood sat up again and said its say about this age of question marks, this century which is scientist, dissects with surgeon knife or tries in acids to dissolve our gold and pushes back the neighborly skies to distances remote and sows them with dim stars scant sown.

To one who so clearly sees the weakness of his time the omens are propitious, one would think, to cut way through the tangle and emerge in the wide levels leading to the sky. But my thought is the poet states his own unfaith when he says that though wholesome and homelike that old faith is gone beyond recovery. His doubt queries

whether the Rock of Ages be dissolved in the scientific chemic laboratory. He gives brief but lucid exposition to the scientific attitude toward Christianity. He sees that man cannot push God out, cannot alienate himself.

He feels; and when he feels, he has sight. His feelings have wider vision than his thoughts. His ailment is that he trusted in the long run to thought rather than feeling, not perceiving feeling might be trusted in that upper realm where man meets God. Experience counts. Experience in God is all. Tennyson knew that. "I have felt," he said, and rested there. Lowell felt and did not rest there. Thus he failed to give leadership to faith. Would he had had wings and had made them fly!

No man who thinks and takes stock of himself, but finds in himself at times an accountable fineness of feeling, some richer vein than he had known his life concealed. He asserts that himself prays at morning and at evening and has the finer feeling to be sure that his mother's knee is better school than all the Platos had known to teach. He had a time or two a cloudless vision of God. There spoke the man. Would he had tried oftener or had succeeded more!

Himself at prayer beside his mother, is so sweetly said as to have made us all children

and a-kneeling at our academe, our mother's knee. He cannot decide who is worse enemy, he who would rob him of his faith and leave him naked against the storm, or such as make rituals and robes and painted saints cloud God's face.

He has lost the power of worship. His father's faith is burdensome to him. Compulsory prayer seems to him but a vacuum. That old wrestling with God which made the Puritans, Cromwell and the rest, big as a story sky—has lost majesty to him. Alas for him! His blood was thinner than theirs. They fought their way to faith: he felt his way to doubt. They were more sons of Anak than he. Unfaith pleases him. He caresses it. This confession is sad, at least to me. His fathers' faith had elemental grandeur. He magnifies doubt. He overloads the word "superstition." He does not cut with clearness as if he were lapidist.

He states in weaker phrase Tennyson's

There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Both Tennyson's and Lowell's accent is wrong. They had a truth, but it was not so roomy as they thought. True enough, but not quite true as he means it, possibly. Those who hold high faiths are not to be set down as holding blind faiths. Great faith is wise faith and not blind

faith. This age is no cathedral builder, he sadly says, which is true enough of such a dubitative faith as his, but most distinctly is not true of more stalwart faith. Cathedrals were never built as now. Doubt will not build them: doubt cannot build them. Faith can, and does, and will. Have Christ; and cathedrals are majesties very accessible.

Democracy does not need to haggle with Bethlehem nor Calvary. The manger and the cross are very dear to such as know where enduring democracies are rooted. They are rooted there, not otherwheres. He queries of this Western giant, Democracy, “How make him reverent toward God?” Readily, if the Giant knows the King of kings was our chief democrat and created democracies. Lowell’s characterization of our Frontiersman maker of empires, is stirring, contagious work. He feels him the large-limbed Goth.

He feels sure that man’s soul dwells somewhere in the neighborhood of God, else how had it become such noble legend. But he thinks the miracle is myth. “The miracle fades out of history” is what this poet says; and here is his failure as prophet. Miracle scares him. He had not a God-Christ. Such as have Him need have no such decadence of miracle. Miracles never stood safer than this hour. Christ is the widest

miracle; and since he is and came, miracle sits surely on the throne.

He wonders if whether what we deem God's voice be not hallucination, as sometimes we make sure we hear our mother's voice long silent, a dream quite beautiful and yet a dream. But man shall grope in spite of himself, because of himself. This is vision, but not adequate. His Christ does not bulk enough; his cross is not burdened by a God. He cannot be quit of the Western Goth who, may chance, is not all the Goth he thinks him. He is greater than this poet knows. Democracy is not such a vandal as our poet guesses. This common man is not so cut with doubts, nor with such doubts as beset the poet's self. The common man is wondrous wise. He does not affect philosophy but has it. Lowell sees his Goth find God is all that pays.

The world is so lacking in completeness, satisfaction, profit, that these drive a soul to worshiping something not himself but an ideal self. And when the poet phrases that ideal self, it is so strangely and strongly like Christ as to make the pulses thrill, though whether the poet knows the resemblance we may not say, or whether he thought that his own ideal had contrived this high personality. The ideal is to be some divine somewhat brotherly and no stickler for trifles,

a hater of cant and one who takes pleasure in the world. Who is such save One, He of the open fields and lover of the skies and walker across the fields fresh plowed and through human hearts new plowed by storm and passion and deep sin and beside graves and through them with resurrections in his hands and abundant forgiveness and abundant strengths?

But Lowell does not step with such firm foot. His faith is too tenuous. It tears apart like air when you try to grip it in your fist. This One is served on smoking field of war or obscure toil or at the ballot honestly and valorously cast or in truth stood for against all odds or good deeds done without regard to a reward. Yes, doubtless. But by a strenuous doctrine of One who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.

He walked out of the minster saddened. And little wonder. It is not, as he thinks, that all thought is sad, but that such dubitative thought is sad. There are not latent valor in this thin blood of such a faith competent to contend with doubt in masterful fashion as the Christ wrestled the devil down on the long yellow hills of barren Quarantania.

The sparrows chatter on the images: the sparrow hawk flings bigger shadow than his prey—which things are sad. The cathedral has not

lifted the song. But out from the old gray minster the poet lifts his voice. It sounds a trumpet. If he would but let it blow blast after blast, blast on blast, and “set the wild echoes flying”!

“O Power,” he calls, and sings that he has evidence of Him outside, above and yet within.

Would “The Cathedral” might have ended here! But it did not. Doubt dug its rowels in his soul once again. He must file a caveat. He would not let the sun set on his Cathedral, all in a wash of glory like a wine-red sea. God is here, but scarcely Christ. The omnipotent is missing. The king has not come to his coronation.

If this rendition of “The Cathedral” seem to some lacking in fire, consider where lies the fault. It is doubt’s protest, doubt’s poem. Not requiem, not that; but there is no pæan in it. The note of knowledge does not invade it sufficiently to make matchless music. Contrast the finale of “Christmas Eve” and see how boldly and gloriously there the Christ stands, so that to touch his garment or to kiss his feet has expiation in it, and a song.

“The Cathedral” is hesitant. It is all along, and in the end, dubitant. Sometimes it has the truth; sometimes, oftentimes, states the case fairly and squarely. The doubt element is expression of the age. No one doubts that. The atmosphere is

accurate. We fault not that. But where the fault lies as a Christian poem is, it fails because it does not journey far enough. It gropes to the end. That is not Christian. 'Tis a theistic poem, truly, but not a Christ poem. There lies its lack, its fallacy, its absence of a song. A great Christ had with our poet drenched his "Cathedral" with music outsounding seas, making one look to find the angels who made the ecstasy.

## LOWELL—THE LIFE OF FAITH

LOWELL was, I hope I have in a fashion made apparent, subconsciously what he was. His formulated creed had been less satisfying than his life. He was too academical to put Christ at Christ's place—that or some other reason, though to me it seems kinder or truer to put it down as an academical lack. But as with moral passion, so with the hopes which spring from the gospel of the Christ. He believed in God but did not so truly "Believe also in me," as Christ so frankly and explicitly bade us. But his subconscious faith felt its way toward God. He was never heathen in ethics nor in faith. He was bigger and truer than that. The utter surrender to faith in God, which makes life illimitably glad, he did not know, or if he knew he did not tell. And those lifts of the tide of his love and faith, toward "the hope that maketh not ashamed," we may trace with reverent gladness.

Read "On the Death of a Friend's Child":

"Tis sorrow builds the shining ladder up,  
Whose golden rounds are our calamities,  
Whereon our firm feet planting, nearer God  
The spirit climbs, and hath its eyes unsealed.

True is it that Death's face seems stern and cold,  
When he is sent to summon those we love,  
But all God's angels come to us disguised;  
Sorrow and sickness, poverty and death,  
One after other lift their frowning masks,  
And we behold the seraph's face beneath,  
All radiant with the glory and the calm  
Of having looked upon the front of God.  
With every anguish of our earthly part  
The spirit's sight grows clearer; this was meant  
When Jesus touched the blind man's lids with clay.  
Life is the jailer, Death the angel sent  
To draw the unwilling bolts and set us free.

Here spoke a Christian hope.

“Sea Weed” expresses faith.

The sense of God, and the avenging of him  
when the days of wrath are full, are written in fire:

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record  
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and  
the Word;

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—  
Yet that scaffold sways the Future, and, behind the dim  
unknown,

Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his  
own.

We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is  
great,

Slow of faith, how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of  
fate,

But the soul is still oracular; amid the market's din,  
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave  
within,—

“They enslave their children's children who make com-  
promise with sin.”

• • • • •

Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 'tis Truth alone is  
strong,  
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her  
throng  
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all  
wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the beacon-moments see,  
That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut through Ob-  
livion's sea;  
Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding cry  
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose feet  
earth's chaff must fly.

The purpose for which life is, here and here-  
after, is written in "Elegy on the Death of Dr.  
Channing":

And often, from that other world, on this  
Some gleams from great souls gone before may shine,  
To shed on struggling hearts a clearer bliss,  
And clothe the Right with luster more divine.

Thou art not idle: in thy higher sphere  
Thy spirit bends itself to loving tasks,  
And strength to perfect what it dreamed of here  
Is all the crown and glory that it asks.

For sure, in Heaven's wide chambers, there is room  
For love and pity, and for helpful deeds;  
Else were our summons thither but a doom  
To life more vain than this in clayey weeds.

From off the starry mountain peak of song,  
Thy spirit shows me, in the coming time,  
An earth unwithered by the foot of wrong,  
A race revering its own soul sublime.

**His dimness speaks in “Bibliolatres”:**

Bowing thyself in dust before a Book,  
And thinking the great God is thine alone,  
O rash iconoclast, thou wilt not brook  
What gods the heathen carves in wood and stone,  
As if the Shepherd who from outer cold  
Leads all his shivering lambs to one sure fold  
Were careful for the fashion of his crook.

There is no broken reed so poor and base,  
No rush, the bending tilt of swamp-fly blue,  
But he therewith the ravening wolf can chase,  
And guide his flock to springs and pastures new;  
Through ways unlooked for, and through many lands,  
Far from the rich folds built with human hands,  
The gracious footprints of his love I trace.

And what art thou, own brother of the clod,  
That from his hand the crook wouldest snatch away  
And shake instead thy dry and sapless rod,  
To scare the sheep out of the wholesome day?  
Yea, what art thou, blind, unconverted Jew,  
That with thy idol-volume's covers two  
Wouldest make a jail to coop the living God?

Thou hear'st not well the mountain organ-tones  
By prophet ears from Hor and Sinai caught,  
Thinking the cisterns of those Hebrew brains  
Drew dry the springs of the All-knower's thought,  
Nor shall thy lips be touched with living fire,  
Who blow'st old altar-coals with sole desire  
To weld anew the spirit's broken chains.

God is not dumb, that he should speak no more;  
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness  
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor;  
There towers the mountain of the Voice no less,  
Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,  
Intent on manna still and moral ends,  
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore.

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,  
And not on paper leaves nor leaves of stone;  
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,  
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.  
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,  
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,  
Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit.

“The Black Preacher” is steeped in the poet’s belief in judgment and is grim and strong.

“An Ode for the Fourth of July, 1876” expresses honest fast faith in a nation’s God, and is tense as Kipling’s “Recessional.”

“After the Burial” fails us. Lowell had not wings to rise against the tempest of mighty winds. He had heartbreak. May chance this poem is his first anguish, which would assuage when faith once more caught on the Rock. I cannot tell. His limitations are on him and his faith is shadowed like a landscape covered with a cloud. In this poem faith and unfaith mix. Sad and very pitiful; and his heartache was very bitter and fitted to make men die.

But “L’Envoi” is wiser and more true:

Whether my heart hath wiser grown or not,  
In these three years, since I to thee inscribed,  
Mine own betrothed, the firstlings of my muse,—  
Poor windfalls of unripe experience,  
Young buds plucked hastily by childish hands  
Not patient to await more full-blown flowers,—  
At least, it hath seen more of life and men,  
And pondered more, and grown a shade more sad;

Yet with no loss of hope or settled trust  
In the benignness of that Providence  
Which shapes from out our elements awry  
The grace and order that we wonder at,  
The mystic harmony of right and wrong,  
Both working out His wisdom and our good.

. . . . .  
God is open-eyed and just,  
The happy center and calm heart of all.

And “The Changeling” has more insight and  
wistfully gets closer to God and holds his hand:

I had a little daughter,  
    And she was given to me  
To lead me gently backward  
    To the Heavenly Father’s knee,  
That I, by the force of nature,  
    Might in some dim wise divine  
The depth of his infinite patience  
    To this wayward soul of mine.

I know not how others saw her,  
    But to me she was wholly fair,  
And the light of the heaven she came from  
    Still lingered and gleamed in her hair;  
For it was as wavy and golden,  
    And as many changes took,  
As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples  
    On the yellow bed of a brook.

To what can I liken her smiling  
    Upon me, her kneeling lover,  
How it leaped from her lips to her eyelids,  
    And dimpled her wholly over,  
Till her outstretched hands smiled also,  
    And I almost seemed to see  
The very heart of her mother  
    Sending sun through her veins to me!

She had been with us scarce a twelvemonth,  
And it hardly seemed a day,  
When a troop of wandering angels  
Stole my little daughter away;  
Or perhaps those heavenly Zingari  
But loosed the hampering strings,  
And when they had opened her cage-door  
My little bird used her wings.

But they left in her stead a changeling,  
A little angel child,  
That seems like her bud in full blossom,  
And smiles as she never smiled:  
When I wake in the morning, I see it  
Where she always used to lie,  
And I feel as weak as a violet  
Alone 'neath the awful sky.

As weak, yet as trustful also;  
For the whole year long I see  
All the wonders of faithful Nature  
Still worked for the love of me;  
Winds wander, and dews drip earthward,  
Rains fall, suns rise and set,  
Earth whirls, and all but to prosper  
A poor little violet.

This child is not mine as the first was,  
I cannot sing it to rest,  
I cannot lift it up fatherly  
And bliss it upon my breast;  
Yet it lies in my little one's cradle  
And sits in my little one's chair,  
And the light of the heaven she's gone to  
Transfigures its golden hair.

Whittier walks with more firm tread and is surer  
of his way:

I know not where His islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond his love and care.

Lowell stopped this side of knowledge. His faith was militant, not triumphant.

Browning's

The best is yet to be

Lowell did not know. Would that he had sung that radiant line; would that he had been able to have swung into the meaning and the music and the faith, which glow like the sunshine, and sing like the rapturous waves! Rabbi Ben Ezra knew

Grow old along with me;  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made.

## LOWELL—L'ENVOI

WHEN we come to "L'Envoi" we must write ourselves down rich in debt to Lowell. If he flame not highest, he flames high. He was so clean, so wholesome, so loyal, so good a lover. The sweet, deep love of him is strong as strength, and tender as a kiss. Not many love lyrics, whatsoever way your thought strays as I mention this, when taken in connection with the life of him who wrote, can be more beautiful than "She Came and Went." Burns sang of love as laverocks do; but we cannot forget how slack he was as touching lovers' promises. The kiss upon his lips is salt with tears spilled from the eyes of broken-hearted women. But Lowell's loves are clean as Lowell's life; so his love songs make us laugh and weep all in one.

As a twig trembles, which a bird  
Lights on to sing, then leaves unbent,  
So is my memory thrilled and stirred;—  
I only know she came and went.

As clasps some lake, by gusts unriven,  
The blue dome's measureless content,  
So my soul held that moment's heaven;—  
I only know she came and went.

As, at one bound, our swift spring heaps  
The orchards full of bloom and scent,  
So clove her May my wintry sleeps;—  
I only know she came and went.

An angel stood and met my gaze,  
Through the low doorway of my tent;  
The tent is struck, the vision stays;—  
I only know she came and went.

O, when the room grows slowly dim,  
And life's last oil is nearly spent,  
One gush of light these eyes will brim,  
Only to think she came and went.

He loved men. He enjoyed democracy. He loved his friends with a stout, wholesome love. He saw Lincoln was “ broad prairie,”

Nigh to God and loved of loftiest stars.

He knew and loved the spirit of essential Christianity. He saw life for life's sake. His words hacked like a crusader's ax. He groped and questioned, not as Guinevere,

Is it yet too late?

but, “ Is the largest true ? ”

He saw the ethics of Christianity, and loved them. He ponders the right behaviors of the soul. We cannot learn a coarse word from his lips; for he seemed not to know one. He loved the sea, the crag, the woodland and the wold, the buttercup and violet, the birch, the willow, the hemlock and the pine, the river and the sky, the marshes and the autumn wind. He saw and loved humor and knew the grace of laughter, even the guffaws of it; saw humor was philosophy and used it so, and

knew tears and smiles to be full neighborly. He knew

The deep religion of a thankful heart.

His heart wanted life and heaven and groped toward them with faltering but honest steps. He lacked the divine, contagious faith which eliminates tragedy. He knew not what Saint Simeon Stylites knew, who clanged:

I smote them with a cross.

Lowell had not a cross, and did not know the Christ was God.





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